Commentary
January 2006

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Books in Review

Kevin Shapiro • Kay S. Hymowitz • Hillel Halkin
Jonathan Kay • Michael J. Lewis • James Nuechterlein

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE • $5.95/$7.00 CANADA • VOLUME 121 • NUMBER 1

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Commentary

Vol. 121 · January 2006 · No. 1

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COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly (except for a combined July-August issue) by the American Jewish Committee. Editorial and business offices: 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022. Telephone: (212) 891-1400. Fax: (212) 891-6700. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Letters intended for publication may be edited. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMENTARY, PO Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** (800) 829-6270. Single copy is $5.95; one year $45, two years $79, three years $109. Add $11.00 per year for subscriptions to Canada, $19.00 per year for all other foreign destinations. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

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Indexed in *Reader's Guide*, *Book Review Digest*, and elsewhere. U.S. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870. Printed in the U.S.A. All back issues are available in electronic form at **www.commentarymagazine.com**.

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American Jewish Committee
E. Robert Goodkind, *President*

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Commentary
January 2006

Letters from Readers

Realpolitik

To the Editor:

Gary Rosen and I agree that the United States should pursue its national interests ["Bush and the Realists," September 2005]. We disagree on the best way to pursue these interests, however, and our differences nicely reflect the competing foreign-policy prescriptions of realism and neoconservatism. Let me comment briefly on why his views are mistaken.

First, Mr. Rosen dismisses my discussion of America's declining international popularity by suggesting that "it is difficult to see why [public-opinion polls] would figure in the reckonings of a hard-edged realist." It is not difficult at all: realists worry about public opposition because it makes it harder for foreign governments to back us. Mr. Rosen admits that "the support of other countries can help us to shape the international climate to our own goals." Anti-Americanism encourages leaders who might otherwise support us to tread warily, and has led some—such as former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder—to oppose us openly. Rising anti-Americanism also increases the population of genuine extremists who use violent means (e.g., terrorism) against us. Realism says one should isolate one's enemies while maximizing allied support, and a foreign policy that is doing the exact opposite is hardly in the U.S. national interest.

Second, Mr. Rosen believes I am too critical of U.S. support for Israel. In particular, he claims the two countries are united not by the efforts of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) but by the "sense of shared trauma and threat" from the "vicious onslaught of Muslim 'martyrs.'" Here Mr. Rosen has the causality backward. We do not support Israel because we face a common threat from terrorism; we have a terrorism problem today in good part because we have been backing and bankrolling Israeli expansionism for several decades. Furthermore, if our two countries are such natural allies, why do AIPAC and its allies work so hard to intimidate U.S. politicians and silence potential critics? Remember what former minority leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO) told AIPAC's annual meeting: "without your constant support . . . and all your fighting on a daily basis to strengthen [the U.S.-Israel] relationship, it would not be."

Third, Mr. Rosen believes that my proposed strategy of "offshore balancing" would be a "strategy of retreat" whose cost to our credibility would be "incalculably high." This accusation is an old scare tactic, but hardly a convincing one. Hardliners routinely warn that any adjustment in America's global presence would have catastrophic effects on our credibility, but there is scant historical support for this claim. The U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam did not cause any important dominos to fall; instead, it allowed us to rebuild our conventional forces and tacitly ally with China against the Soviet Union. Today, of course, Vietnam is a friendly country that is embracing Western-style market reforms.

Mr. Rosen is clearly uncomfortable with realism as a guide to U.S. strategy, and he approvingly quotes President Bush's rejection of realism in a 2002 speech at the Air Force Academy. But realism's track record as a guide to foreign policy looks far better than Bush's dismal achievements in this arena.

In the early cold war, realists like George Kennan helped invent the strategy of containment, while correctly warning against trying to control the developing world by force. In the

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1960's, Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz—the two preeminent academic realists—were early opponents of the Vietnam war, on purely strategic grounds. In the 1980's, Waltz and fellow realists John Mearsheimer and Barry Posen published careful analyses showing that the Soviet Union was not the military titan that right-wing ideologues depicted. As Waltz noted in 1979, the real question was whether the Soviet Union could keep up, and the Soviet Union's rapid demise demonstrated that Waltz and other realists were correct. In the early 1990's, Posen and Mearsheimer also recognized that Iraq was a third-rate power and were among the few analysts to forecast correctly the stunning U.S. victory in the 1990-91 Gulf war.

Finally, realists were in the vanguard of the opposition to war with Iraq in 2003. While publications like COMMENTARY were beating the drum for war and assuring Americans that the occupation would be easy and cheap, realists like Mearsheimer and myself were warning that preventive war was unnecessary and the consequences would be dire. Today, with thousands of Americans and Iraqis killed and wounded, a price tag that will eventually exceed $1 trillion (!), and no end in sight, which group seems to have the clearest vision of our national interest? For all its limitations, realism remains a more valuable guide to U.S. foreign policy than the idealistic fantasies offered by its primary intellectual opponents.

STEPHEN WALT
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Gary Rosen states that foreign-policy realists, once a dominant ideological faction in both major parties, now have no home in either. He welcomes this, and delights in the fact that George W. Bush has ignored the realists while fulfilling the long-nurtured neoconservative dream of invading Iraq. He further avers that realists now have as "natural allies" the "nativist minions of Patrick J. Buchanan and the libertarian ideologues of the Cato Institute."

As one of the founders of the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy, and cofounder and editor of a magazine that does indeed publish realists and libertarians along with Buchanan (and, to cap it off, as one who believes that America would benefit from a lower rate of immigration), I suppose I qualify as one of those "nativist minions" who has helped bring this alliance into being.

Who could have foreseen this odd coalition? During the 1980's, when I wrote for COMMENTARY and considered myself a neoconservative, such a possibility was too remote to imagine. But it was not easy to predict what neoconservative intellectuals would do in the wake of a miraculously peaceful victory over Communism. Though prudently hawkish during the cold war, they began hatching schemes for American global domination (see the 1992 strategy memorandum written by Paul Wolfowitz while serving Dick Cheney at the Pentagon) and in the wake of 9/11 pushed for an invasion of a thuggish secular regime that had absolutely nothing to do with the terror attack. It was as if in response to Pearl Harbor a powerful faction had pushed for the American military to "liberate" Stalin's Russia—and worse, had persuaded the President to follow such daft advice.

The disastrous results flowing from President Bush's adoption of neoconservative prescriptions has greatly expanded the number of those who once felt close to the neoconservatives and have since come to believe the group woefully misguided. Realists are first among these, and have shifted ground the most. (Libertarians and Old Right types were always skeptical.) But the plain fact is that neoconservatism as an intellectual force is no longer respected by smart people outside the camp. Its propaganda resources are still feared—neoconservatives can apparently still raise enough money to publish their magazines and newspapers and to employ a small army of Washington agitators—but the group is now increasingly seen as bearing much responsibility for a dark and perhaps tragic turn in American history.

It will take time for these intellectual shifts to have any impact on American political realities, and there is no guarantee that they will. But as someone who did learn during his neoconservative days that percolations among intellectuals can have momentous long-term consequences, I pray that these new conversations and coalitions that have grown up in reaction to neoconservatism will come to something. For if the neoconservatives are as dominant in coming administrations as they have been in this one, America's future will be war-torn and bleak.

SCOTT MCCONNELL
The American Conservative
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

Considering the catalog of gallingly naive prognostications made by neoconservatives about the invasion and occupation of Iraq, it is remarkable that anyone from that camp would go on the offensive against foreign-policy realists, whose predictions have been much closer to the mark. Nonetheless, we are pleased that Gary Rosen has decided to confront our ideas.

It has become a cliché to refer to the Manichaean nature of neoconservatism, but it features so prominently in Mr. Rosen's analysis that it bears highlighting. He explains that Islamic terrorism, whether in "Sharm al-Sheikh, Baghdad, Jakarta, Istanbul, [or] elsewhere," amounts simply to a "nihilistic threat to any kind of civilized order." For Mr. Rosen, such attacks are "far from being a 'strategy' for reversing hated policies." Unfortunately, he presents no evidence to support this claim, clinging to the conventional wisdom that the terrorists hate us because of our freedom, and defying the wealth of evidence to the contrary compiled by scholars like the University of Chicago's Robert Pape.

Denying that politics lies at the heart of most terrorism precludes the possibility of victory against those who use it. As the author Robert Wright has pointed out, the conception of evil shared by President Bush and Mr. Rosen is dangerous: "Evil in the Manichaean sense isn't just absolute badness. It's a grand unified ex-

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Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society

John Haygarth, FRS
(1740–1827): A Physician of the Enlightenment

Christopher Booth

John Haygarth, MD, FRS (1740–1827) hailed from an obscure valley in the Yorkshire dales in the north west of England. Educated at Sedbergh School, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, he became a physician in Chester in 1767. There he introduced separate wards in the Chester Infirmary where patients with fever could be isolated and cared for. It was the stimulus for the development of the fever hospitals of nineteenth-century England. Haygarth moved to Bath in 1798, where he continued to write on medical matters. He also played a major role in the foundation of the Bath Provident Institution for Savings, a model for the savings-bank movement in England.

Vol. 254 0-87169-254-6/978-0-87169-254-2 $60 Printed July 2005

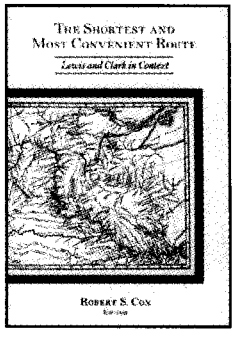
Emil von Behring
Infectious Disease, Immunology, Serum Therapy

Derek S. Linton

In 1901 Emil von Behring received the first Nobel Prize in medicine for serum therapy against diphtheria, a disease that killed thousands of infants annually. Diphtheria serum was the first major cure of the bacteriological era and its development generated novel procedures for testing, standardizing, and regulating drugs. Since the introduction of antibiotics Behring and his work have largely been forgotten. In the first English-language scientific biography of Behring, Derek S. Linton emphasizes Behring's seminal contributions to the study of infectious diseases, the formation of modern immunology and innovative research on specific remedies, and vaccines against deadly microbial infections. This biography explores his complex relations to the rival bacteriological schools of Robert Koch in Berlin and Louis Pasteur in Paris, the emergent German pharmaceutical industry, and the institutionalization of experimental therapeutic research. The second part of the volume contains translations of thirteen key articles by Behring and his associates on infectious diseases, immunology, drug testing, and therapeutics spanning thirty years of his remarkable scientific career.

Vol. 255 0-87169-255-4/978-0-87169-255-9 $65 Printed September 2005

Transactions of the American Philosophical Society



The Shortest and Most Convenient Route
Lewis and Clark in Context

Robert Cox (ed.)

Based on papers delivered at the Bicentennial Conference for Lewis and Clark, held in Philadelphia in August 2003 to explore new approaches to understanding "Meriwether Lewis in Philadelphia," these essays grapple with the motives underlying the Corps of Discovery and the impact on American culture. Most of the essays in this volume began in that invigorating three-day exchange. The multiple contributions address and shed light on how the nation's foremost urban center, Philadelphia, helped to shape this quintessential errand into the wilderness. The authors use the question of failure as a means of interrogating the intellectual and cultural context in which the expedition was framed and in which its results were distributed.

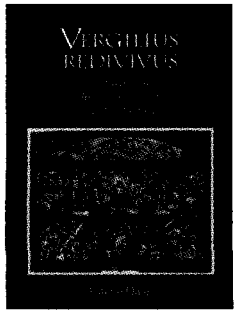
Vol. 94, Pt. 5 0-87169-945-1 $24 Printed November 2004

The Opening of the Maritime Fur Trade at Bering Strait
Americans and Russians Meet the Kaŋiġmiut in Kotzebue Sound

John R. Bockstoce

The maritime fur trade was an important commercial force in the Bering Strait region from the early nineteenth century until to outbreak of the Second Word War; nevertheless, its origins are not well understood. Two important documents—which have received little scholarly attention—shed considerable light on the genesis of this trade. These manuscripts describe the voyages of the American trading brigs General San Martín in 1819 and Pedler in 1820, and they provide valuable information on the complicated relationships that existed between the American maritime traders and the Russian officials in Kamchatka and Alaska, as well as with the inhabitants of the Bering Strait region in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Vol. 95, Pt. 1 0-87169-951-6 $24 Printed June 2005



Vergilius Redivivus
Studies in Joseph Addison's Latin Poetry

Estelle Haan

Virtually ignored by modern scholarship, Addison's Latin verse has failed to receive the critical attention it deserves. Addison's current reputation rests almost exclusively on his role as the accomplished essayist of the Spectator and Tatler papers, as the author of the drama Cato, and as the composer of a body of minor English verse. Estelle Haan examines the intricate inter-textual relationships between some of Addison's neo-Latin poems and the poetic corpus of one Augustan poet: Virgil (in particular, the Georgics).

Vol. 95, Pt. 2 0-87169-952-4 $24 Printed June 2005

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planation of such badness, the linkage of diverse badness to a single source." When one accepts this reductionist explanation, shades of gray disappear. One must confront this badness with unswerving determination, at any and all costs, because the alternative is the total collapse of Good in the face of Evil.

This is absurd. Islamic terrorism, threatening as it is, does not ascend to such towering heights that it can precipitate a total war with America. It has neither the mass appeal, nor the institutional cohesion, to overturn the Western liberal order. The greatest threat posed by Islamic terrorism—undeterrable non-state actors with a nuclear weapon—will not be eliminated by invading armies, civil policing, or even democracy.

It is also worth pointing out that the leaders of Israel, who have been more educated and brutalized by fanatical terrorism than their counterparts in the United States, do not share President Bush's (and Mr. Rosen's) utopian view of what can be wrought in the Middle East. In fact, they consider it so much bunkum. Ariel Sharon has told Natan Sharansky that his theories about democracy as a solution to terrorism "have no place in the Middle East." The fact that the security situation in Iraq has worsened since the January elections illustrates this point all too clearly.

Mr. Rosen protests that a refusal to continue to occupy territory in the Middle East amounts to a "strategy of retreat." He worries that a posture of "offshore balancing" (in Stephen Walt's phrase) would deliver an unacceptable blow to American credibility. But a tactical retreat is better than "staying the course" all the way to strategic disaster.

Ronald Reagan had the presence of mind to marginalize his neoconservative advisers at just the right moment, facilitating the peaceful demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war. Unfortunately, President Bush has taken a bit longer. Unless neoconservatism is once again relegated to the fringe of American politics, the sapping of American strength and the exposure of American weaknesses will continue unabated.

CHRISTOPHER PREBLE
JUSTIN LOGAN
Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

Gary Rosen mentions the strenuous objection of my co-author Dimitri Simes and myself to the Bush administration's aggressive promotion of democracy. There is much to be said for democracy, of course, but two cautionary notes apply to trying to implant it in today's Middle East.

First, democracy alone will not convert the current crop of extremist jihadists to peaceful change. Indeed, too rapid a democratic transition may destabilize governments and enhance the extremists' opportunities to wreak havoc.

Second, it is the continued active presence of American and allied military forces in Iraq, more than our rhetoric about democracy, that has inspired reform in the region and exerted a beneficial influence on the behavior of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Egypt. Our democratic rhetoric is widely understood as a kind of post-hoc rationale for invading now that the justifications based on weapons of mass destruction and the alleged link between Saddam and al Qaeda have been so thoroughly discredited.

ROBERT F. ELLSWORTH
Del Mar, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Gary Rosen caps his insightful analysis of the reductive thinking of today's "neorealists" by concluding that "we will never discover the right combination of 'carrots and sticks' for the job [of advancing freedom in the Middle East] if, for fear of offending our friends, we resign ourselves to a status quo that nurtures our enemies." This fitting admonition becomes even more urgent given the imperialist objectives of the Islamist foe.

Indeed, it was the great realist thinker Hans J. Morgenthau himself who described the disaster that could befall peace-loving nations that mistook the aggression of an "imperialist" nation—one intent on fundamentally changing the balance of power—for the reasonable demands of a nation seeking only minor adjustments to the status quo. Morgenthau illustrated the problem by pointing to Hitler's successful deceptions and the self-deceptions of his targets.

Realist policies designed to maintain the status quo worked well enough against a rational (if paranoid) Soviet Union whose ideological fires had banked and whose territorial ambitions could be contained. But the present danger is substantially different. We face an implacable Islamist foe who seeks nuclear weapons in the name of imperial ambitions from the 14th century.

President Bush and his realist-bred Secretary of State recognize this recrudescent Islamist imperialism for what it is and have fashioned a counterstrategy to defeat it in its own backyard. This is a tribute to Morgenthau's tutoring, not a repudiation of it. He understood the galvanizing power of ideology for ill and good, and its role in defending the national interest.

MICHAEL BALCH
Iowa City, Iowa

GARY ROSEN writes:

Stephen Walt is right to be concerned about how the rest of the world views the United States. The good will of other nations makes it easier for us to pursue our goals, just as their hostility makes it more difficult. But it is impossible to assign the proper weight to such factors without first determining what U.S. interests are at stake in the matters that most agitate international public opinion. I should not have to tell a card-carrying realist that there are questions more fundamental to American security and well-being than how a given policy plays in Brussels or Riyadh.

My deeper point was one that I also assumed to be axiomatic for foreign-policy realists: that we should gauge the disposition of other states not by the rhetoric of their leaders or the polling of their publics but by their actual behavior. The fact is that, despite unhappiness with our policies in Iraq, the U.S. continues to enjoy substantial international cooperation on a range of issues, from con-

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Important Commentaries on the World

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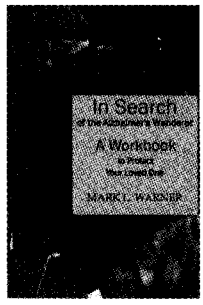

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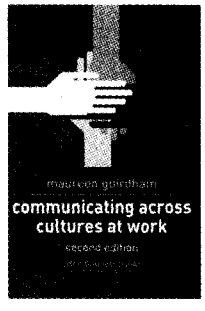

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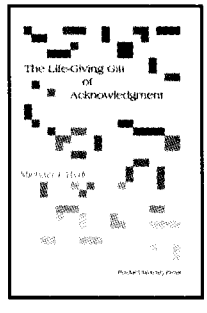

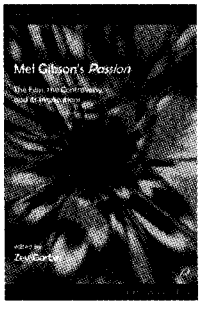

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taining the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea to stabilizing Afghanistan to isolating the Syrian regime. In the fight against jihadist terror, mutual assistance in intelligence and law enforcement has grown and intensified. All of this is happening because even our most disaffected allies and sometime friends understand that we share not just common enemies but a host of important interests—again, the sort of point one might expect a realist to make.

But Mr. Walt's realism is pulled this way and that by the hobbyhorses he rides. He is determined to cast the Bush administration as a rogue aggressor and international pariah, a threat to peace likely to generate a counterbalancing alliance. And because he is incapable of finding any mundane explanation for America's close ties with Israel—he might start with the survey research, which shows consistent, overwhelming popular sympathy for the Jewish state over its Arab foes—he joins the crackpot fringe in pointing an accusing finger at the "Israel lobby." His smoking gun? A quote from former Congressman Gephardt flattering the aspirations of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. For more such supposedly damning evidence, I would direct Mr. Walt to AIPAC's website, which abounds with similar testimonials.

Mr. Walt suggests that "offshore balancing," his own alternative to our current strategy, would amount to a mere "adjustment" in America's global position. But he fails to do justice to the extremism of his proposal. He wants the U.S. to withdraw from the central theaters of our struggle against Islamic militancy and Arab backwardness—from Iraq certainly and, I assume, from Afghanistan and other outposts where our presence (like the Israeli presence in the West Bank, if not in the Middle East) is now, in his view, the prime cause of violence, radicalism, and instability. Even at the level of public diplomacy, he would like the U.S. to stop hectoring the region's various autocrats about (as he puts it in his book) "what to do and how to live." Though I risk being accused of another "scare tactic," I somehow doubt the U.S. would be made safer by rethinking its long-overdue commitment to liberalization in the Middle East. Still less do I understand how Mr. Walt could derive any comfort from the prospect of watching the nascent democracies of Iraq and Afghanistan disappear under a tide of civil war and jihadism.

Mr. Walt is proud of realism's track record, but its legacy in the Middle East is not a happy one. The last half-century in the region may have looked from a certain perspective like "50 years of peace," as the realist eminence Brent Scowcroft audaciously suggested in a recent *New Yorker* interview, but it has left behind the world's most illiberal regimes, replete with mass graves, secret police, and profound deficits in human development (exhaustively catalogued in recent UN reports). Worse, this "peace" has incubated and allowed to spread a virus-like politico-religious ideology that now threatens to wreak havoc on our own way of life. An argument can be made that during the long years of the cold war the U.S. had little choice but to reach an accommodation with the sheikhs and strongmen of the Middle East. Today, prudence and self-interest, to say nothing of moral considerations, point us in a very different direction.

Mr. Walt's letter is seconded, as if on cue, by the allies he has found in his campaign to tame America's dangerous global ambitions. Scott McConnell of the *American Conservative* wonders how the once "prudently hawkish" neoconservatives could have strayed so far. But he forgets the hysterical accusations that flew against neoconservatives during the cold war—and that he and his magazine now eagerly repeat. For today's Old Right, as for yesterday's New Left, neoconservatives are propagandists for American empire, drunk with military power and visions of domination and driven by forces invisible to the naive political observer. It is in the pages of the *American Conservative* that one reads about the "brownshirting" of the conservative movement and, in an article by Mr. McConnell himself, about a "mood" on the pro-war Right that is "at least latently fascist."

Mr. McConnell's newfound pessimism about America's role in the world springs, I would suggest, from distinct sources on the paleoconservative Right. There is a natural affinity between nativism at home and defeatism (or worse) abroad. After all, who are we—mongrelized and cosmopolitan as we have become—to serve as any sort of model for the rest of the world? What good can come of trying to promote overseas the very sort of liberalization that, in the paleocon scheme of things, has corrupted our own once proudly Anglo-Saxon polity?

Where such thoughts lurk, anti-Semitism is seldom far behind, and there is no avoiding its presence in the long record of Mr. McConnell's boss, Patrick J. Buchanan. The irony cannot be lost on Mr. McConnell that the leader of his own movement, which claims to resist an incipient American fascism, is himself guilty of indulging in the most *au courant* of anti-Semitic tropes. As Buchanan, writing in the *American Conservative*, so neatly encapsulated his view: "Who would benefit from a war of civilizations between the West and Islam? Answer: one nation, one leader, one party. Israel, Sharon, Likud." Was Mr. McConnell proud to publish this obvious play on the Nazi slogan, "*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer*"?

Bringing up the rear we find the libertarians, represented here by the letter of Justin Logan and Christopher Preble. (Mr. Preble is the director of foreign-policy studies at the Cato Institute, which houses the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy.) I have never been called a Manichaean before, but if it means wishing to combat those who behead captives, blow up schoolchildren, and reject every sort of modern liberty, I proudly wear the label. I never said that the jihadists had no politics. They do: they wish to reestablish a medieval caliphate. Accomplishing this, however, would require a good deal more than reversing a few of America's "hated policies." I suspect that bin Laden and

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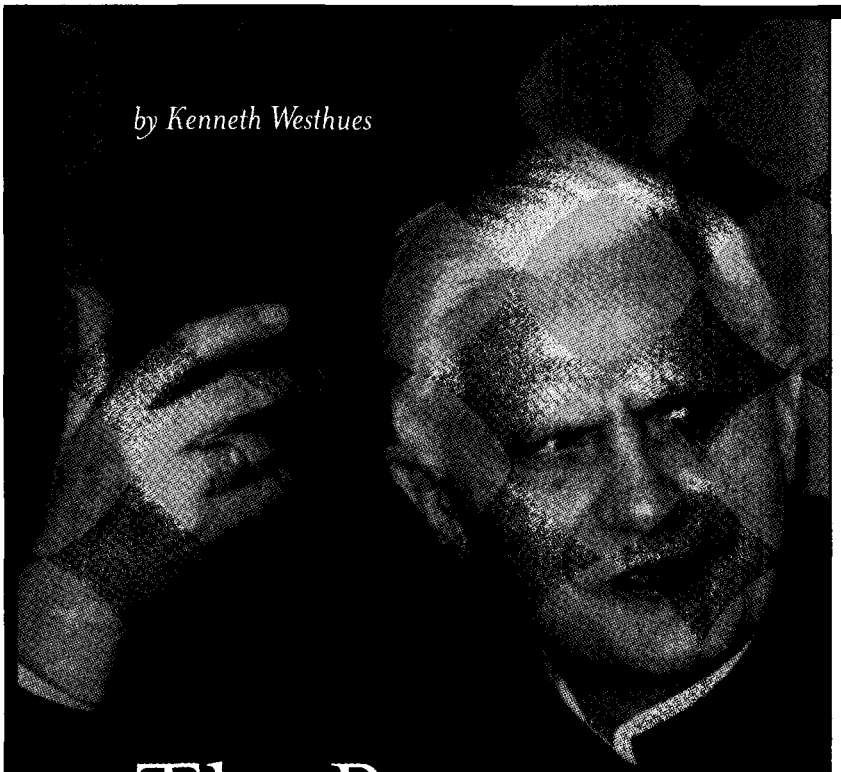

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Zarqawi would not be satisfied if we simply ceded Iraq to their tender mercies.

Messrs. Logan and Preble parrot a few of the more credible assertions made by critics of the war in Iraq, but they should not pretend to come to these matters with an open mind. The Cato Institute is dogmatically laissez-faire in foreign policy just as it is on every other policy question. Fearful of statism at home, libertarians have reflexively resisted virtually every assertion of American power and influence since the cold war: no to the National Endowment for Democracy, no to NATO expansion, no to the first Persian Gulf war, no to engagement in the Middle East, no to American intervention in Haiti and the Balkans.

The frame of mind behind this agenda was summarized almost a decade ago by Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at Cato and now a charter member of the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy:

> For nearly five decades, the United States has acted more like an empire than a republic, creating an international network of client states, establishing hundreds of military installations around the world, at times conscripting young men to staff those advanced outposts and fight in distant wars, and spending hundreds of billions of dollars on the military. Indeed, [this] globalist foreign policy [has] badly distorted the domestic political system, encouraging the growth of a large, expensive, repressive, and often uncontrolled state.

Despite the upheavals and changed circumstances in America's international situation in recent years, this continues to be Cato's basic outlook. It leaves little guesswork in predicting the foreign-policy views of the institute's staffers, which is why, in my article, I called them ideologues.

I agree with Robert F. Ellsworth that we cannot think of our aims in the Middle East simply in terms of democratization, not least because Islamists are often the ones most capable of exploiting an immediate turn to elections. I prefer to think of our agenda as one of liberalization, entailing progress not just on the electoral front but also in establishing civil society and a full range of modern rights. Our military presence has certainly encouraged this trend, as Mr. Ellsworth suggests, but more fundamental, I would argue, has been the example shown to the region by our halting but very real achievements in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Where would Hans Morgenthau, the founder of modern foreign-policy realism, come down in today's debate? Michael Balch feels sure that Morgenthau would recognize the threat posed by the aggressive ideology of the Islamists. I have my doubts. Like his intellectual heirs, Morgenthau had trouble taking seriously anything but states as actors in international relations. I suspect he would have regarded the jihadists as at most a serious nuisance, and would have opposed any effort to use American power to change the political and cultural dynamic of the Middle East. I trust, though, that he would have avoided the more reckless rhetoric of those who now claim to speak in his name.

Jewish Numbers

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article "Jews and the Jewish Birthrate" [October 2005], Jack Wertheimer raises a critical issue regarding the future of the Jewish people residing outside of Israel. Numbers obviously matter in a democracy, and it is not good for a minority group's internal morale or influence in the wider society when it is in numerical and relative decline. We are less persuaded by Mr. Wertheimer's proposed solution and mode of persuasion: that the other denominations follow the lead of the Orthodox in issuing "countless sermons and homilies" exhorting Jews to marry only each other and to have lots of children.

Most of the recalcitrant non-marrying, infertile, and intermarrying Jews are unlikely to hear these exhortations. What Mr. Wertheimer misses is that Orthodox rabbis have succeeded in guiding their flocks not because of their own brilliance or single-mindedness, but because they preach to the choir. Their congregants are predisposed to marrying inside the religion and having children. The movement's demographic success is due to self-selection into a segregated and geographically concentrated religious subculture. But the Orthodox model is eschewed by 90 percent of American Jewry, and is no more realistically replicable for most Jews than the Amish way of life or Mormon faith is for most Americans. For Mr. Wertheimer to offer an alternative already rejected in the religious marketplace is fruitless.

The 20th-century biomedical revolution made sexual activity independent of procreation and privatized decision-making on family size. Pro-natalist policies in sophisticated modern populations have signally failed, even when initiated by national governments. The best example of this is in France, where the state has offered economic and social incentives for families to have children since the end of World War I. Social engineering has succeeded only when imposed in the opposite direction by totalitarian regimes, as in the one-child policy of the People's Republic of China. Nowadays, most Western democratic governments that want to increase their populations or compensate for imbalances in their national-age structure rely on immigration—that is, welcoming newcomers.

We believe, despite Mr. Wertheimer's scoffing, that the solution for Jews concerned about continuity has to be inclusiveness toward the broad community, religious and secular alike. We write not as advocates but as researchers on religious identity. We directed the American Jewish Identification Survey of 2001, which found a rising tide of secularization among American Jews, surpassing the trend among Americans in general. The percentage of Americans professing no religion rose from 8 percent in 1990 to 14 percent in 2001. Among Jews, the numbers rose from 20 to 32 percent.

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Although most unaffiliated Jews are indifferent to rabbinic exhortation, our research shows that many are intensely proud of their Jewish heritage and feel a strong connection to fellow Jews. The Jewish community can and must nurture and fortify these attachments through cultural and educational programs. Reengaging the millions of disaffected Jews who are on the periphery seems—mathematically, at least—to be a more effective strategy for Jewish renewal than King Canute-like calls to resist the tide of lower fertility and individualistic choices.

ARIELA KEYSAR
BARRY A. KOSMIN
Trinity College
Hartford, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer posits a dichotomy in modern Jewish institutions between traditionalists, who have successfully packaged their message and unflinchingly tell their children to go out and make more Jews, and liberals, who express an ambiguous, feckless message. He seems to propose that liberal Jewish leaders simplify their message.

Mr. Wertheimer is undoubtedly correct that Orthodoxy is currently in the ascendant, but this trend might not hold in the long term. Ideas of autonomy, inclusion, and science are powerful—at least in the modern West, where most Jews live. The Orthodox children whose abundant numbers Mr. Wertheimer envies may ultimately be no more able to resist Western ideas than were so many of our great-grandparents who left Eastern Europe and the bonds of tradition, engendering the present generation of exogamous American Jews. It was precisely the failure of Orthodoxy to adapt a few generations ago that led to today's secularism, denominationalism, post-denominationalism, and intermarriage. For Mr. Wertheimer to project from the experience of the present Orthodox generation seems both simplistic and blind to unpredictable historical forces.

Finally, Mr. Wertheimer is wrong to think that the solution to the demographic problem lies solely in what non-Orthodox rabbis preach; it also lies in what they do. Among other things, rabbis can encourage both traditional and non-traditional families to procreate, demand dramatically reduced day-school tuitions for multiple siblings, and open their synagogues—often empty during the week—for reasonably priced day-care centers. Then we might see some increase in the liberal Jewish population.

ARNOLD & DEBRA BLANK
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer's prescription to the non-Orthodox denominations for reversing their declining birthrates—the clear enunciation of traditional "norms and obligations"—would force them either to renounce their most basic values or to confront their recalcitrant laities in ways that could fracture their movements. His prescription will not be adopted.

The Conservative and Reform movements need leadership, ideas, money, and institutional structures that grow naturally from their core ideologies. Such ideas include enhancing opportunities to meet potential Jewish partners, welcoming back to Judaism those with Jewish ancestors, aiding those who wish to adopt, and embracing sincere converts.

LAWRENCE J. EPSTEIN
Stony Brook, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer criticizes a document issued by the Reconstructionist rabbis for "avoid[ing] an endorsement of marriage as a Jewish ideal." Regrettably, his citations are incomplete, preventing readers from seeing the original statements in context.

The document in question is a 1993 report, "Homosexuality and Judaism: The Reconstructionist Position." It addressed a population for whom marriage was not then—and is barely today—recognized as a right, and yet Mr. Wertheimer goes to it looking for an affirmation of marriage as an "ideal."

Mr. Wertheimer writes that marriage is "disparaged" in the document as a relationship between "two unequal parties." The full sentence in the report reads: "We recognize that traditional Jewish marriage was a partnership between two unequal parties." It is hard to see how anyone familiar with Jewish law could object to that statement. In traditional Jewish marriage as defined by Orthodox halakha, the woman is acquired by the man as any other "property" would be acquired. In the case of divorce, the woman is at the mercy of the man, who alone is empowered to act. That sounds like "unequal parties" to me.

The report also contains this statement: "The family is the primary and most appropriate vehicle for the transmission of Jewish identity and values." Mr. Wertheimer seems deliberately to avoid the challenge of what Reconstructionists, among others, have affirmed in an authentic Jewish way: that while "family" is a value, there is more than one model of it. As the report notes:

> The most constant value of the family is its ability to provide intimacy, emotional and material support, stability, and the transmission of Jewish commitment, values, and practices. Many old and new kinds of families can fulfill these values. We are committed to preserving the traditional primacy of family because we understand the family as the primary, stable unit of intimacy.

Single Jews, gay and lesbian Jews, and intermarried Jews are in many cases also committed to raising Jewish children. At the same time, there are plenty of heterosexual marriages between Jews in which neither parent is transmitting Jewish identity. It is puzzling that Jack Wertheimer would present a distorted view of a report that clearly supports the idea of family. Perhaps he feels that supporting family is not the same as supporting heterosexual endogamous marriage as the norm. But in that case, his article should have been titled "Only Heterosexual Endogamously Married Jews Welcome," which seems to have been the real agenda.

RABBI RICHARD HIRSH
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Wyncote, Pennsylvania

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U.N. Corruption Includes Bias Against Israel

It's Time the Media Set the Record Straight

Branches of the United Nations have endorsed Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israel (or in U.N. terminology – use of "all available means including armed struggle" against "foreign occupation"*). They have taught Palestinian children anti-Jewish hatred and encouraged them to pursue Israel's destruction and have subjected the Jewish state to a unique campaign of vilification. Yet news reports of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish actions by the U.N. routinely ignore the organization's bias and portray the U.N. as an objective moral arbiter.

The U.N. Conference Against Racism in Durban promoted racism – against Israel and the Jews.

The Facts:

Saddam Hussein was not alone in buying influence at the U.N. where corruption goes far beyond the Iraq oil-for-food scam. For more than 30 years, Arab states have used their oil wealth, and the threat of withholding oil, to guarantee an automatic anti-Israel majority.

The U.N. General Assembly, dominated by Arab and Muslim states most of whose schools, media and mosques promote Jew-hatred, repeatedly passes one-sided, anti-Israel (and anti-American) resolutions, and blocks criticism of Palestinian and broader Arab actions, including genocide.

The General Assembly has repeatedly convened emergency sessions dedicated to condemning the Jewish State but has held no such sessions on the Rwandan massacres, Indonesian crimes in East Timor, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, Iraqi slaughter of Kurds, Vietnamese mass murder of ethnic Chinese or genocide in the Sudan. (Sudan, a member of the Arab League, has been protected at the U.N. by Arab states, despite the Sudanese government's genocide against Christians and non-Arab Muslims.)

Israel is the only country subject to hostile scrutiny by a standing committee — the "Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories."

The Arab-Israeli conflict is the only global dispute in which one side's position — the Arab side — is advanced through direct U.N. funding and support. U.N. Secretariat and General Assembly branches spend millions of dollars a year to advocate a pro-Palestinian agenda through conferences, publications and films that delegitimize the State of Israel.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is the only U.N. agency dedicated to assisting a specific group of refugees, the Palestinian Arabs, who comprise just 13.5% of all refugees globally. UNRWA schools use anti-Semitic textbooks which seek to delegitimize Israel and promote its destruction.

For more than half a century, UNRWA has opposed permanent settlement of Palestinians in their present areas of residence, instead supporting Arab demands that their refugee status continue until Israel allows them residence within its borders.

UNRWA chief Peter Hansen openly states that Hamas members are on UNRWA's payroll. (The EU and United States designate Hamas a terrorist organization.) UNRWA employees have used official U.N. vehicles, ambulances and travel documents to transport terrorists and weapons. UNRWA camps harbor terrorists who produce bombs, store weapons and recruit and train suicide bombers.

The U.N.'s Commission on Human Rights has repeatedly supported the right of Palestinians to pursue their terror campaign against Israel while ignoring massive human rights violations by its members — including some of the worst human rights violators and sponsors of terrorism.

The U.N. World Conference Against Racism (Durban, 2001) promoted racism — against Israel and the Jews. References to "holocaust" and "anti-Semitism" were applied to the Palestinians as victims of alleged Israeli racism.

The U.N.'s dangerous bias and scapegoating of Israel deserve full and accurate exposure in the media.

*United Nations General Assembly A/RES/37/43 (Dec. 3, 1982)

United Nations General Assembly A/RES/41/101 (Dec 4, 1986)

United Nations commission on Human Rights E/CN/RES/2002/8 (April 15, 2002)

United Nations commission on Human Rights E/CN/RES/2003/6 (April 15, 2003)

United Nations commission on Human Rights E/CN/RES/2004/10 (April 16, 2004)

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TO THE EDITOR:

The biggest flaw in Jack Wertheimer's article is its failure to take into account the phenomenon of secularism. The 2001 American Jewish Identity Survey found that 49 percent of Jews in the United States identified themselves as secular or partly secular. The decline of religious Judaism is the single most important development in the Jewish world over the past 150 years, yet neither Mr. Wertheimer nor the National Jewish Population Survey refers to it.

I agree that it is crucial to transmit Jewish identity to the next generation. If we are to do so, we must satisfy the demand for different types of Jewish learning. The place to do that is in the schools. The biggest failing of American and world Jewish communities, Israel included, is the lack of facilities for teaching Judaism as culture. With the exception of Mexico and Argentina, there is not a single secular Jewish day school anywhere in the world.

It is for this reason that the Posen Foundation has offered grants to universities and colleges that teach Judaism as culture. We currently have programs at fourteen universities and four colleges in America and Israel, and we intend to double these numbers over the next few years. As we have seen, there is an enormous thirst for Jewish knowledge among culturally impoverished Jewish students (as well as among non-Jewish students), who are unable to find suitable instruction in accordance with their beliefs and upbringing.

FELIX POSEN
London, England

TO THE EDITOR:

As Jack Wertheimer emphasizes, the future size of the American Jewish community will partly depend on its fertility levels. Overall, American Jews have a modestly lower fertility rate than they need for population replacement (though only modestly lower than the overall U.S. rate). But a more interesting question is what current fertility trends mean for the denominational mix, or the religious habits, of the Jewish population.

As Mr. Wertheimer notes, the Orthodox have substantially higher birthrates than the other denominations; they also tend to marry at younger ages, shortening the number of years in each generation. If current patterns continue, Orthodox growth will be compounded by both of these factors.

Today, though, the major transitions in the numbers and the makeup of American Jewry have less to do with fertility than with migration across denominational boundaries and changes in religious affiliation or behavior. Jewish adults who profess a disconnection with Judaism tend to be those who had little or no association with the religion as children. They are also more likely to be among those who intermarry. Thus, the way children are raised is a significant demographic force.

Data from the most recent National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) indicate two relevant patterns for Jewish adults under the age of forty-five, the demographic sector in which most family growth occurs. Among those who reported not having been "raised Jewish," two-thirds fall into the category of a "person of Jewish background" who does not currently call himself Jewish. Eighteen percent call themselves "just Jewish," and only the remaining 14 percent claim affiliation with one of the denominations.

Almost two-thirds of those who were raised "just Jewish" indicate that they are currently "just Jewish." Fifteen percent say they are not Jewish now, and the remaining approximately 20 percent claim some denominational affiliation.

Thus, one could argue that about 40 percent of the respondents are Jews "at the margins" with limited formal connections to Judaism, even though at some point in their lives they had a Jewish connection that might have offered an opportunity for a significant entrée to Jewish life. The young adults in this substantial segment of the population are perhaps important candidates for outreach activities, regardless of one's perspectives about what a Jew is or is "meant" to be.

FRANK MOTT
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR:

Jack Wertheimer touches on a topic that may be considered the "third rail" of contemporary Judaism. Enjoying unparalleled security and success in the history of the Diaspora, American Jews, fortified to withstand hate, are disappearing before the love of their neighbors.

It seems that in the perceived interest of remaining "relevant," non-Orthodox rabbis have wandered from fundamental principles about what is important and meaningful in a Jewish life, dropping the precept to be fruitful and multiply in favor of relating to life in contemporary America as their congregants would like it to be. The result is the genuinely existential threat to American Jewry that Mr. Wertheimer describes.

Jewish girls outside the Orthodox movement are taught that the most important thing they can do is read the Torah as their brothers used to be able to do. But if our boys do not want to marry our girls, or participate in ritual and synagogue life, none of that will really matter.

The Orthodox movement has managed to reconcile modernity with adherence to what might be called the Jewish law of survival. (My twenty-something nieces from Boro Park have post-college degrees *and* children.) In its obeisance to egalitarianism, Conservative Judaism has rejected the idea of teaching young women that their role is to be wives and mothers (even if they become doctors and lawyers, too), and young men to be husbands and fathers.

Perhaps Judaism's liberal movements need to adopt their own endangered-species act. With a bit of luck, we might prove to be like the snail darter—downlisted in 1984 from endangered to just threatened—and not the dinosaur.

JOHN R. COHN
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

One always reads Jack Wertheimer's articles about the manifold follies and calamities of American Jewry with a mixture of despair over what he reports and intense admiration for his courageous truth-telling.

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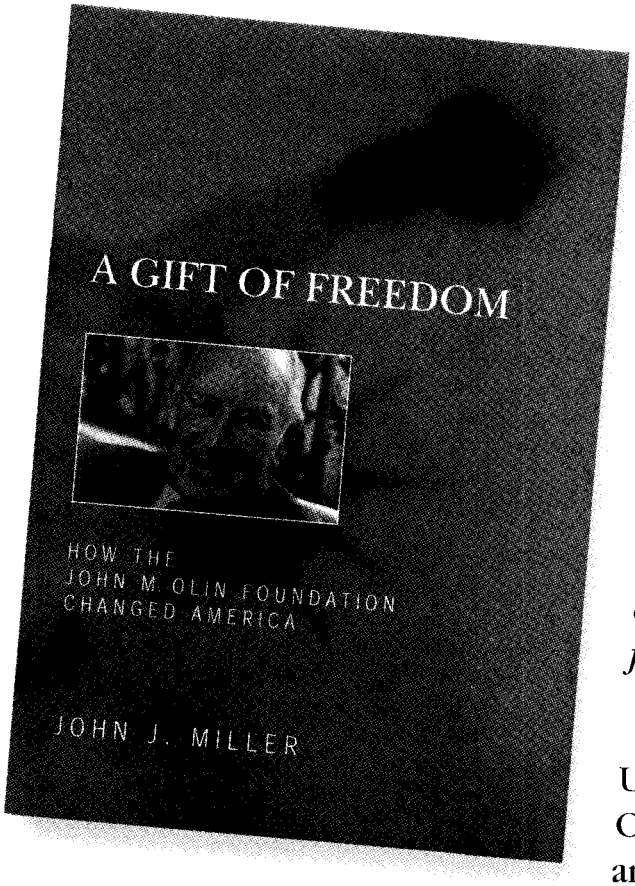

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One may also derive some (small) consolation from remembering that American Jews are not alone in parroting the cliché that the highest value to pass on to children is the ability to "think for themselves." Here is the poet S.T. Coleridge (in 1830) recalling his response to a super-liberal friend on the very same subject:

> Thelwall thought it very unfair to influence a child's mind by inculcating any opinions before it should have come to years of discretion, and be able to choose for itself. I showed him my garden, and told him it was my botanical garden. "How so?" said he, "it is covered with weeds."—"Oh," I replied, "that is only because it has not yet come to its age of discretion and choice. The weeds, you see, have taken the liberty to grow, and I thought it unfair in me to prejudice the soil towards roses and strawberries."

EDWARD ALEXANDER
Seattle, Washington

JACK WERTHEIMER writes:

In light of some wildly distorted press accounts of my article, it is a pleasure to read these letters, which, whatever their criticisms, do me the courtesy of reacting to what I actually wrote.

Ariela Keysar and Barry A. Kosmin are doubtful that rabbis can influence attitudes and norms. (Interestingly, they completely ignore my call for secular leaders to speak up, too.) Their skepticism is widely shared, and speaks volumes about the current condition of the American Jewish community. From all corners, one hears laments for the absence of leaders with "vision." Simultaneously, leaders are expected to follow rather than to lead, and to reflect rather than to challenge consensus views.

Ariela Keysar and Barry A. Kosmin are also impatient with my call for an exploration of Jewish norms. Very well, then, I invite them to consider a straightforward social-scientific question: why is it that the only two Jewish populations reproducing themselves above replacement level are Orthodox Jews in the Diaspora and Israeli Jews in general—the latter including not only the Orthodox but also the self-professed secular? Are these secular Israelis also among the "choir"? And if so, who drafted them, and by what means? Something in the Israeli ethos would appear to have created a pro-natal culture of a kind lacking in most Diaspora communities, and especially in the U.S. What might that be? Rather than dismissing such questions as tantamount to a demand for "social engineering," we owe it to ourselves to figure out why some Jewish societies successfully reproduce themselves and others do not.

Arnold and Debra Blank likewise chafe at my positive assessment of what Orthodox Jews have achieved. In fact, they blame Orthodoxy itself, and its failure to "adapt," for all sorts of ills besetting the contemporary Jewish community, including, no less, widespread intermarriage. There is a book to be written about the intolerance of many liberal Jews—I am not putting my correspondents in this group—who eagerly embrace Jews of every stripe except the Orthodox. For my part, I am well aware of failings in the Orthodox world today and in the past; nor am I prepared to predict the movement's future vitality. But for the present, Orthodox Jews in this country are bearing more children than any other group and are demonstrably better at retaining their allegiance. As the demographer Frank Mott confirms in his letter, this *current* reality will transform the American Jewish community within one generation.

Where I agree with the Blanks is in their call for less exhortation and more action. Jewish leaders of all kinds could do much more to create an environment hospitable to raising Jewish children. Unfortunately, though, little or no effort is made, for example, to translate the commonly expressed *wish* for "reduced day-school tuition" into an actual decision by a local federation or a family foundation to allocate the necessary funds. This failure reflects an obliviousness to long-term needs—among which none is more important than nurturing a successor generation—on the part of many in positions of leadership.

In his concluding words, Lawrence J. Epstein also expresses a wish: namely, that sincere converts be embraced. In this area, too, there is much pious talk. Every few years, some rabbi makes a splash by calling for a missionary campaign to convert "un-churched" Americans. And yet the number of conversions to Judaism is in fact way down. Could it be that people are looking in the wrong place? The likeliest candidates for conversion are Gentiles already married to Jews and children born to a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother. As survey data demonstrate, moreover, conversionary families behave far more like in-married Jewish families and far less like interfaith families. I therefore subscribe to Mr. Epstein's call for actively and openly working toward the conversion of non-Jews married to Jews.

Rabbi Richard Hirsh takes strong exception to my claim that Reconstructionist Judaism denigrates marriage—and then promptly demonstrates that I have read his movement correctly. Refusing to name marriage as the Jewish ideal, he insists instead on the equal status of all kinds of family relationships within and outside the bonds of matrimony. He also goes out of his way to note the historically unequal status of men and women in Jewish marriages—as if this were somehow an oddity and not the norm in virtually every premodern society. The insistence that traditional Judaism is peculiarly wanting because our ancestors did not anticipate our superior modern outlook both demeans the tradition and undercuts the values that one supposedly means to uphold.

In his parting shot, Rabbi Hirsch suggests that there is only one way to include intermarried Jews and gay and lesbian Jews in the Jewish community: by welcoming them without condition. I disagree. In the long run, Jewish life will be far stronger if it adheres to standards. To put this in terms of policy, one can welcome intermarried families without pretending that they are no different from in-married Jewish families,

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and one can welcome homosexual men and women without re-inventing Judaism as a religion that regards heterosexuality and homosexuality (and bisexuality) as equally valid options.

Felix Posen faults me (as do Ariela Keysar and Barry A. Kosmin) for "failing to take into account the phenomenon of secularism"—as if secularization were a new development rather than an aspect of modernity that has influenced Jewish life for over 200 years. In Mr. Posen's estimate, 49 percent of Jews consider themselves "secular or partly secular." I would put the figure at over 90 percent—for which modern Jews are *not* partly secular?

But then who knows what these slippery categories mean? I suspect that most survey respondents do not. Mr. Posen might be shocked to discover how many self-proclaimed "partly secular" Jews attend synagogue, engage in ritual practices, and consider such activities central to their Jewish lives.

Is it possible to transmit a strong Jewish identity to the next generation based on a secular understanding of "Judaism as culture"? Certainly, between the late-19th century and the middle of the 20th, vibrant secular movements flourished in Jewish neighborhoods from Birobidzhan to Buenos Aires, from kibbutzim in Israel to enclaves in Brooklyn and the Bronx. In our own time, however, it is far from clear that, outside of tightly knit communities, secular Jewish identity has any staying power.

To test this proposition, all Mr. Posen need do is to look at Israeli public schools, which are essentially "secular Jewish day schools" and which regularly fail to produce literate Jews. Before he invests even more of his money, he might also sponsor research into how many of today's secular Jews do succeed in transmitting their identity to the next generation. To judge from Frank Mott's observations about patterns among the "just Jewish," there are grounds for deep skepticism on this score.

I would place an even greater stress than does John R. Cohn upon teaching both young women *and* men to take responsibility for marrying and raising children. Foundations and others interested in the welfare of the Jewish community ought to examine why Jewish men consistently outpace women in marrying non-Jews—and ought openly to discuss the harmful consequences of this pattern on the marital options of Jewish women. They might also explore why young Jews of both sexes are having so much trouble meeting and forming lifelong bonds, and why in the aggregate they are bearing children below replacement level. As I suggested in my article, our dismal ignorance about these matters and our unwillingness to speak about them in public has done great harm to young Jewish men and women.

Finally, I am grateful to Edward Alexander, whose own forthright writings I have long admired, for his words of support. His apt quotation of Coleridge reinforces my belief that the time has come for American Jews to engage in a serious conversation about their values—values that may, at best, advance Jews as individuals while arguably undermining the interests of the group.

A Matter of State?

TO THE EDITOR:

Joshua Muravchik's excellent article about the debate on the Right about Iraq does not consider what may be a critical cause of the difficulties there: the gap between President Bush's stated policy and the actions of U.S. officials in Baghdad ["Iraq and the Conservatives," October 2005].

Very few reports from Iraq have recognized that actual policy on the ground has been dominated by intelligence and foreign-service officers, even though the Pentagon won the argument with the State Department about whether to attack Iraq, and the head of the U.S. occupation authority, L. Paul Bremer, was appointed by Donald Rumsfeld. Officials at the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) who were responsive to the Pentagon were few and weak. And CENTCOM, the military headquarters, has been more influenced by its longstanding Middle East advisers than by policy guidance from Pentagon civilians.

The main problem early on was that there was no Iraqi government to replace the regime of Saddam Hussein. State and the CIA vetoed the leading candidate to be or to form a government—namely, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), the umbrella group that represented virtually all factions of the exile opposition to Saddam. The administration's foreign-policy professionals believed that the residents of Iraq had at best a weak national identity as Iraqis, that their primary identities were as Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds (and other minorities), that they had little belief in or desire for democracy, and that they were not capable of peacefully governing themselves. This consensus, which could be self-fulfilling, was influenced by longstanding relationships with Arab elites, many of whom are connected to Sunni dictatorships and fear Shiites and democracy.

The professionals judged that the pursuit of democracy in Iraq would destabilize the region and prevent the U.S. from getting needed support from Arab states against Islamic terrorism. They believed that the only realistic way to erect a government that could hold Iraq together was to enable a new Sunni authoritarian regime to come to power. It had to be Sunni to satisfy the region, and authoritarian because Sunnis did not enjoy public support in Iraq.

This diagnosis and approach was never presented to the President as a policy he could accept or reject. Many of the foreign-service officials had opposed going to war, and after losing that argument they acted in whatever ways they could to advance their own understanding of U.S. interests.

There is no way to be sure that using the INC as America's initial Iraqi interlocutor or as the basis of a provisional government would have worked, but the decision not to do so decisively affected the course of events.

MAX SINGER
Jerusalem, Israel

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JOSHUA MURAVCHIK writes:

I thank Max Singer, whom I have long held in high esteem, for his compliment. He presents a theory to explain what went wrong in Iraq. While this theory meets the test of internal coherence, it is supported by no evidence I know of, so it amounts to speculation. I find it implausible.

That some of our national-security professionals were out of sympathy with the President's strategy is no doubt true. But it beggars belief to suppose that these same individuals, many of them risking their lives to work in Iraq, were maneuvering assiduously to defeat the President's policies in favor of a secret design of their own, namely to impose a new Sunni dictatorship. Such cabals are the work of dedicated ideologues (like the Communists who once infiltrated our government), not of ordinary diplomats or soldiers or intelligence professionals who happen to demur from current policy.

The idea that we could have handed Iraq to the INC, as Mr. Singer argues we should have done, begs the question of how it would have enforced its rule. If it was capable of doing so on its own, then why did it wait for us to overthrow Saddam? The INC had begun in the early 1990's as the kind of umbrella Mr. Singer describes (organized by the CIA, a fact which also comports ill with Mr. Singer's theory). But all accounts I have seen or heard suggest that most of its constituent elements, once they had the chance, especially after liberation, preferred to speak for themselves. What remained was the faction loyal to Ahmad Chalabi.

Ironically, then, Mr. Singer's proposal would have boiled down to the kind of anti-democratic approach of which he accuses the State Department. That is, he would have had us anoint a new Iraqi government, impose it on the Iraqis, and then act as its enforcers. The course we have taken instead, albeit fitfully and with missteps, seems wiser to me, namely, to create the rudiments of a democratic system. If the INC is capable of winning power through the Iraqi electoral system, I will join Mr. Singer in hailing it.

There are many theories about what went wrong in Iraq. I, for one, am not yet willing to concede that anything did—aside from the myriad things that go wrong in the course of any war and perhaps, too, a glib optimism on the part of some in anticipating what it would take to subdue the virulent enemy we are up against on his own terrain.

Post-Gaza

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin is apparently under the illusion that the mass expulsion of Jews from their homes in further acts of "disengagement" is a sound alternative for Israel ["Israel After Disengagement," October 2005]. He feels that if Israel were to undertake such a "bold and courageous decision in order to help solve its conflict with the Palestinians," Europe and other countries would welcome Israel back into the comity of nations. Even the Arab powers would be relieved to know that the battle between the Palestinians and the Israelis had at long last ended.

All this could be achieved, Mr. Halkin writes, if the U.S. were to declare that after withdrawing from the West Bank, Israel would be in "full compliance with UN Security Council resolution 242," and the U.S. would recognize its borders with the Palestinian Authority. No doubt, he concedes, there would be continued trouble from Palestinian irredentists, but the situation would be "infinitely preferable to the present state of affairs."

Does Mr. Halkin's desire for Israel to be accepted by Europe and others merit a third major retreat by Israel after the disasters of Oslo and Gaza? How far does he think the U.S. will go to oppose Arab demands for the Arab refugees' "right of return" to Israel? Would he be shocked if the Arabs waged another *intifada* to secure such a right? He does not consider that the Arab states need the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to continue so that they can avoid dealing with their own problems.

MARVIN MAURER
Toronto, Canada

TO THE EDITOR:

At the beginning of his article, Hillel Halkin expresses doubts about the wisdom of the Gaza disengagement and the strategy behind it, and about the ability of the Israeli populace to endure another, larger-scale disengagement from the West Bank. By the end of the article, he has overcome his doubts and is willing to support the evacuation of Jewish areas in Judea and Samaria if the United States were to step in and guarantee the resultant borders.

Why should the U.S. government support Mr. Halkin's plan? President Bush has insisted that progress toward peace depends on the growth of democratic institutions among the Palestinians. But Mr. Halkin, like Ariel Sharon, is not interested in Palestinian democracy or even in a peace process. All that matters to them is Israel's ability to retreat behind its security fence and its U.S.-certified borders.

I believe that Bush and Natan Sharansky have it right, and that it is a mistake to ask nothing of the Palestinians. Without some kind of decent society and government in the Palestinian areas, Israel cannot be assured of its safety from rockets launched over the security fence, or from explosives smuggled into the country among the thousands of Palestinian workers and their vehicles that will continue to enter it legally.

Nor, it must also be said, will decent Palestinians fare too well in an anarchical or despotic Gaza and West Bank. This should at least give pause to all those who press for unilateral Israeli withdrawal on moral or humanitarian grounds. ("Hardliners" like myself are supposedly disingenuous when we say such things.)

Under a negotiated settlement with a decent Palestinian leadership, however far off that seems today, Jews would (one hopes) be able to live and travel in the biblical lands of Judea and Samaria, just as they can today. The unilateral action that Mr. Halkin advocates would forclose this possibility for the foreseeable future by giving in, for all intents and purposes, to the Palestinian desire for

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territory that is *Judenrein*. And to what fate would his withdrawal consign the Jewish landmarks, monuments, and holy sites in these areas? No doubt they would be destroyed as quickly as the synagogue in Gaza was torched the day Israel withdrew from there. One does not have to be a messianist to be troubled by the abdication of Jewish and democratic self-respect that Hillel Halkin's proposal entails.

GILAD BAR HEN
Rosh Pinah, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin has now changed his mind three times in the pages of COMMENTARY. In 2002, he argued that the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip should stay. In 2004, he reversed himself and supported Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan. Now he concludes that the strategy behind disengagement has been "revealed as unworkable." Still, he proposes that Israel negotiate with the U.S. to disengage from close to 90 percent of the West Bank, in exchange for which the U.S. would recognize the resulting borders, endorse them as complying with UN resolution 242, and "guarantee" Israel's "interests" in Jerusalem.

But Israel has already negotiated the way forward with the U.S. In his April 2004 letter to Ariel Sharon, President Bush promised that the U.S. would not support any peace plan other than the Road Map, which requires that the terrorist organizations and infrastructure be dismantled before any further large-scale withdrawal on the part of Israel. Bush also committed the U.S. to support "secure" borders by which Israel could "defend itself, by itself"—which undoubtedly requires a permanent Israeli presence in the unpopulated areas of the Jordan Valley. Finally, the U.S. recognized it as "unrealistic" to expect a withdrawal from major Israeli population centers in Judea and Samaria. Rather than propose new Israeli concessions, the focus should be on commitments the U.S. has already made.

RICK RICHMAN
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

In December 2000, just after the Oslo process had collapsed and the second *intifada* had begun, Hillel Halkin asserted in COMMENTARY that "unilateral separation" by Israel from the Palestinians and the "evacuation" of settlements would not "reduce the level of violence" between Israel and the Palestinians. The Palestinians would follow with "a unilateral declaration" of a state "claiming as its borders the 1967 ceasefire lines between Jordan and Israel." As long as Israel kept any portion of the land captured in 1967, the Palestinians would use violence to try to recapture the "occupied" parts of their state.

Mr. Halkin further predicted that the ongoing struggle with this Palestinian state would be difficult for Israel. "Israeli settlements would be left in putative Palestinian territory . . . , easily reached by Palestinian infiltrators and Palestinian bullets." He contemplated the construction of a security fence, but did not think it would solve Israel's security problems. As he wrote, "fences work both ways: while making it more difficult for the enemy to enter your territory, they hinder you from entering his in response or in hot pursuit."

The disengagement plan that Ariel Sharon announced in 2003 turned out to look remarkably like the unilateral separation that Mr. Halkin warned against. True, the second shoe has yet to drop; Sharon has not yet announced a plan for withdrawal from the West Bank. But I am more confident than Mr. Halkin that a second disengagement will occur. In any case, I cannot understand how he can reconcile his support for that policy with what he himself in 2000 called "Israel's nightmare."

Mr. Halkin now writes that disengagement would reverse "the propaganda push to depict Israel as an apartheid state in which ruling Jews victimize helpless Palestinians." He admits that this image has been fed by "anti-Israel sentiment in [Western] media and intellectual life," as well as by "large and feared Muslim populations" in Europe. Does he really believe that disengagement would mollify Israel's adversaries? Even if the U.S. were to follow Mr. Halkin's advice and declare Israel to be in compliance with UN resolution 242, this would most likely be taken as further evidence of America's unqualified support of Israel.

If Israel's past leaders had been obsessed with international opinion, they would have never been able to take the military measures necessary to fend off Israel's enemies. Ultimately, a state's primary responsibility is to provide its inhabitants with physical security. It must never compromise that security in the furtherance of other political and diplomatic objectives.

The Allies did not return self-rule to the countries they occupied after World War II until they were sure that decent, non-fascist governments that would not threaten international security were in place. Why should Israel surrender territory to a Palestinian state that would continue to threaten its population? One of the most important indicators of whether a Palestinian society has become decent enough to be granted statehood would be its willingness to accept a Jewish minority in its midst. Shamefully, the Palestinians have demanded the right to exclude Jews from their state. Even more shameful is the willingness of most of the rest of the world to champion this demand.

MARTIN KROSSEL
Mamaroneck, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin searches for a "realistic" escape for Israel from the present unholy state of affairs in the Middle East. But all he can come up with is retreat, fences, and (primarily) American guarantees. Then, perhaps, the Arabs and the world will agree to allow a truncated Israel to exist.

This is an illusion. The smaller and weaker and more vulnerable a country (and yes, the less strategic depth you have does make you more vulnerable, even in the age of missiles), the less able it is to protect its vital interests. Mr. Halkin fantasizes that America might step in and with a resounding declaration recognize and guarantee Israel's new border, but when a sov-

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ereign nation cannot take care of itself, its chances for continued existence are slim.

Mr. Halkin states unequivocally that "in the absence of a negotiated agreement, Israel cannot afford . . . to remain forever in the greater part of the territories." How does he know? Who says Israel cannot stay put in the meantime and see how things develop? Based on the past 150 years, it seems to me that the only thing that will constrain Israel's less-than-neighborly neighbors is for Israel to hang on, stay strong, and protect its interests without apologizing or seeking anyone's approval.

YAFFA GANZ
Maaleh Adumim, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Whether or not one thinks it was beneficial for Israel to leave Gaza, a national government has no business telling its citizens where they may or may not live outside its borders. This is a matter for the individual and the local jurisdiction. The forcible removal of the Israeli residents of Gaza during the disengagement signified that the Israeli government agrees that Palestinian jurisdictions should be free of Jews.

There was also no need for Israel to retreat all the way back to the pre-1967 border. The Jewish villages in the northern part of Gaza could have been left under Israeli control. They were not isolated within Gaza but rather contiguous with pre-1967 Israel and situated on the Israeli side of the fence separating it from the Palestinian areas of Gaza.

KENNETH PREISS
Beersheva, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin is a consistently astute observer of Israel, but his recent contribution to COMMENTARY begs to be debated. His thesis, put succinctly, is that while Ariel Sharon was able to concentrate enough political power, and the security forces enough logistical power, to leave Gaza, the effort and fallout were so great, and the national trauma so intense, that there can be no replay in the West Bank. The only way forward would be an American assurance that moving back to the security fence would be recognized as Israel's completion of its obligations under UN resolution 242. He captions this basic proposition with the pithy statement that "the disengagement was a failure."

Except that it wasn't, as demonstrated by the most significant part of the story, which Mr. Halkin somehow manages not to mention: the realignment of Israeli politics under way since Sharon forced the disengagement through the Knesset last year.

No Israeli leader since Ben Gurion has ever been elected prime minister more than twice. No Israeli leader, including Ben Gurion, has ever left his party and remained an important political force. By late November 2005, Sharon was poised to do both. This is no fluke, no momentary aberration. Rather, it is an expression of the most significant development in Israeli politics in decades: the Center has defined its own program, has found its voice, and has lost its patience with the pristine but useless policies of the Left and Right. The Center wishes to complete the security barrier and then find the way to move behind it.

What Mr. Halkin has overlooked is the high degree of acceptance of this Center program evinced by all sides over the past year. Once it has been confirmed by the electorate, even most settlers will accept it—not eagerly, not without demonstrations, but without a need for the drastic measures he fears.

Israel will do what it needs to do on its own, not as the result of a change in American policy.

YAACOV LOZOWICK
Jerusalem, Israel

HILLEL HALKIN writes:

Let me begin with the criticism, made by Rick Richman and Martin Krossel, that I have been a chronic mind changer. Since Mr. Richman and Mr. Krossel have probably been reading COMMENTARY for fewer years than I have been writing for it, they may not be aware that, over the past thirty of those years, I have changed my mind about what I consider the best way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict exactly one-and-a-half times.

From 1974 until recently, I believed in and argued for a two-state, Israeli-Palestinian federation with open borders, a shared Jerusalem, and Jewish settlers living in a demilitarized state of Palestine just as Palestinians live in Israel. Some time after 2002, as Mr. Richman correctly observes, I gave up this belief because, though still of the opinion that it represented the most rational and equitable solution, it no longer seemed practicable to me. Perhaps I should I have reached such a conclusion earlier, but in that case, my problem has been obstinacy, not inconstancy.

As for the remaining "half" a mind change, I continue to believe today, just as I did in 2004, that given (1) the impossibility of reaching a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians that Israel can accept or put its trust in, and (2) the fact that even after disengagement from Gaza, Jews are a precarious majority in the whole of the territory now controlled by Israel and are on their way to becoming a minority, a unilateral withdrawal to borders determined by Israel's military, demographic, political, and historical interests is the best alternative. All that has changed since 2004 is my assessment, in the wake of the Gaza withdrawal, of the political circumstances that would make such a step possible in the West Bank as well.

Messrs. Richman and Krossel, joined by Marvin Maurer, Gilad Bar Hen, and Yaffa Ganz all believe that Israel, rather than proceeding with unilateral disengagement, should sit tight, tough it out, and wait until developments among the Palestinians make them reliable partners for peace. Since none of the five speculates about how long this will take, the question would appear not to concern them.

It should concern them, however, because with every year that goes by, roughly twice as many Palestinian as Jewish babies are born to each family between the Mediterranean and the Jordan, and the Jewish population of the West Bank, not all of it concentrated in the "settlement blocs," continues to grow. Perhaps, indeed, if Israel does wait 10

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or 20 or 30 years, a more responsible, even genuinely democratic Palestinian leadership will emerge. But by then disengagement will be impossible and the Jewish majority west of the Jordan will have either disappeared entirely or shrunk to a few percentage points, so that all that will be left to negotiate is the terms of the binational state that will replace Israel. Is this what my correspondents are for? And if not, what exactly *are* they for?

Because I do not underestimate the dangers that Israel may have to face once a unilateral West Bank withdrawal is completed, there is no need to wave them in my face. But what the critics of unilateralism ignore that it is not enough for them to explain why it is dangerous; they also owe us an explanation of why demographic swamping is less so. A few months ago I wrote a series of columns in the *Jerusalem Post*, whose readers are if anything more hawkish on Israel than COMMENTARY's, challenging them to come up with a practical plan for dealing with the Palestinian population of the territories that they do not want Israel to give up. I received a large number of replies. Each was more magnificently detached from reality than the next. Would Marvin Maurer, Gilad Bar Hen, Rick Richman, Martin Krossel, and Yaffa Ganz like to give it a try, too?

I agree with Kenneth Preiss that there was no need to give up the two or three small settlements at the northern end of the Gaza Strip that are contiguous with Israel; this may yet turn out to have been a mistake, just as the surrender of every inch of Sinai to Egypt was a mistake because it set a precedent of total withdrawal that Israel was subsequently expected by the Arabs and most of the world to live up to elsewhere.

My sympathies are also with Mr. Preiss when he says that "a national government has no business telling its citizens where they may or may not live outside its borders." Indeed I argued a year ago, again in the *Jerusalem Post*, that it was wrong to insist that the Gaza settlers leave their homes; it was enough to inform them, I wrote, that on such and such a date the Israeli army was leaving Gaza and that they were welcome to join it. Those preferring to remain behind should be allowed to do so and to negotiate their own future with the Palestinian Authority.

Could this have worked? Might it have led to surprising new forms of cooperation between the settlers and the Palestinians? I must say that my confidence in my own proposal was somewhat shaken when I was told by a young cousin of mine, a Gaza Strip settler himself, that he thoroughly agreed with it. "And what would happen if it were adopted?" I asked him. "I'll tell you what would happen," he replied. "We'd get volunteers and weapons from all over, declare independence, and kill every Palestinian who got in the way." Perhaps forcible evacuation was not such a bad idea after all.

I agree with Yaacov Lozowick that the Center in Israel, long deprived of the political representation that it merits, has now "found its voice" and would like to see Israel disengage from the Palestinians. But I never maintained otherwise in my article. My point there was simply that much of this Center, too, will shrink from a West Bank withdrawal ten times larger, more difficult, more expensive, and more painful than the withdrawal from Gaza unless it feels assured that this is the last withdrawal that Israel will have to make. Such an assurance can come from the government of the United States alone.

Correction

In the review of Hilary Spurling's book *Matisse the Master* by Steven C. Munson (December 2005), the date for the New York Armory show was given incorrectly as 1912. The show took place in February-March 1913. We regret the error.—ED.

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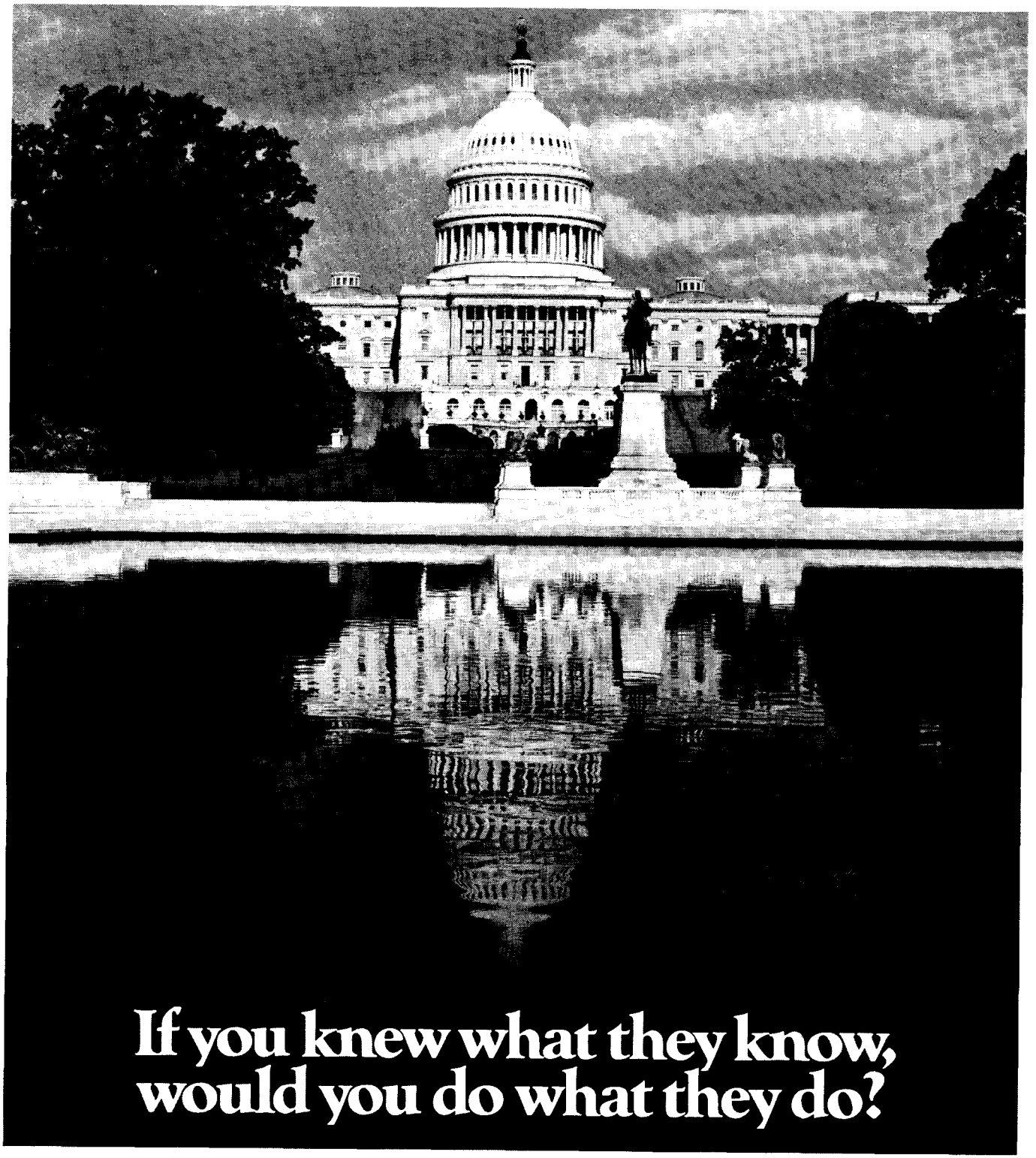

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Commentary
January 2006

The Panic Over Iraq

Norman Podhoretz

LIKE, I am sure, many other believers in what this country has been trying to do in the Middle East and particularly in Iraq, I have found my thoughts returning in the past year to something that Tom Paine, writing at an especially dark moment of the American Revolution, said about such times. They are, he memorably wrote, "the times that try men's souls," the times in which "the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot" become so disheartened that they "shrink from the service of [their] country."

But Paine did not limit his anguished derision to former supporters of the American War of Independence whose courage was failing because things had not been going as well on the battlefield as they had expected or hoped. In a less famous passage, he also let loose on another group:

> 'Tis surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. . . . Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses. . . . [T]heir peculiar advantage is, that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain for ever undiscovered.

Thus, he explained, "Many a disguised Tory has lately shown his head," emboldened by the circumstances of the moment to reveal an opposition to the break with Britain that it had previously seemed prudent to conceal.

The similarities to our situation today are uncanny. We, too, are in the midst of a rapidly spreading panic. We, too, have our sunshine patriots and summer soldiers, in the form of people who initially supported the invasion of Iraq—and the Bush Doctrine from which it followed—but who are now abandoning what they have decided is a sinking ship. And we, too, are seeing formerly disguised opponents of the war coming more and more out into the open, and in ever greater numbers.

Yet in spite of these similarities, there is also a very curious difference between the American panic of 1776-7 and the American panic of 2005-6. To put it in the simplest and starkest terms: in that early stage of the Revolutionary War, there was sound reason to fear that the British would succeed in routing Washington's forces. In Iraq today, however, and in the Middle East as a whole, a successful outcome is staring us in the face. Clearly, then, the panic over Iraq—which expresses itself in increasingly frenzied calls for the withdrawal of our forces—cannot have been caused by the prospect of defeat. On the contrary, my twofold guess is that the real fear behind it is not that we are losing but that we are winning, and that what has catalyzed this fear into a genuine panic is the realization that the chances of pulling off the proverbial feat of snatching an American defeat from the jaws of victory are rapidly running out.

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OF COURSE, to anyone who relies entirely or largely on the mainstream media for information, it will come as a great surprise to hear that we are winning in Iraq. Winning? Militarily? How can we be winning militarily when, day after day, the only thing of any importance going on in that country is suicide bombings and car bombings? When neither our own troops nor the Iraqi forces we have been training are able to stop the "insurgents" from scoring higher and higher body counts? When every serious military move we make against the strongholds of these dedicated and ruthless adversaries is met with "fierce resistance"? When, for every one of them we manage to kill, two more seem to pop up?

Winning? Politically? How can we be winning politically when the very purpose for which we allegedly invaded Iraq has been unmasked as a chimera? When every step we force the Iraqis to take toward democratization is accompanied by angry sectarian strife between Shiites and Sunnis and between each of them and the Kurds? When our clumsy efforts to bring the Sunnis into the political process have hardly made a dent in their support for the insurgency? When the end result is less likely to be the stable democratic regime we supposedly went there to establish than a civil war followed by the breakup of Iraq into three separate countries?

There has been one great exception to this relentless drumbeat of bad news: it occurred in January 2005, in the coverage of the first election in liberated Iraq. To the astonishment of practically everyone in the world, more than 8 million Iraqis came out to vote on election day even though the Islamofascist terrorists had threatened to slaughter them if they did. This very astonishment was a measure of how false an impression had been created of the state of affairs in Iraq. No one fed by the mainstream media could have had the slightest inkling that these 8 million people were actually there, so invisible had they been to reporters who spent all their time interviewing the discontented Iraqi Man in the Street and to cameras seemingly incapable of focusing on anything but carnage and rubble.

But the mainstream media soon recovered from the shock. By October, on the morning after a second ballot in which the new Iraqi constitution was ratified by fully 79 percent of the electorate, the *Washington Post* ran its announcement of these inspiring results on page 13. As for the paper's front page, the columnist Jeff Jacoby would note that it

> was dominated by a photograph, stretched across four columns, of three daughters at the funeral of their father, . . . who had died from injuries suffered during a September 26 bombing in Baghdad. Two accompanying stories, both above the fold, were headlined "Military Has Lost 2,000 in Iraq" and "Bigger, Stronger, Homemade Bombs Now to Blame for Half of U.S. Deaths." A nearby graphic—"The Toll"—divided the 2,000 deaths by type of military service.

In sum, in the words of the Australian blogger Arthur Chrenkoff:

> Death, violence, terrorism, precarious political situation, problems with reconstruction, and public frustration (both in Iraq and America) dominate, if not overwhelm, the mainstream media coverage and commentary on Iraq.

About a year ago, concerned that he might have been exaggerating when he made this assertion on the basis of his "gut feeling," Chrenkoff decided to check it out more scientifically. So he did "a little tally" of the stories published or broadcast all over the world on a single average day (which happened to be January 21, 2005). Here are some of the numbers that, with the help of the Google News Index, he was able to report from that one day:

- 2,642 stories about Condoleezza Rice's confirmation hearings, in the context of grilling she has received over the administration's Iraq policy.
- 1,992 stories about suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks.
- 887 stories about prisoner abuse by British soldiers.
- 216 stories about hostages currently being held in Iraq.
- 761 stories reporting on activities and public statements of insurgents.
- 357 stories about the antiwar movement and the dropping public support for involvement in Iraq.
- 182 stories about American servicemen killed and wounded in operations.
- 217 stories about concerns for fairness and validity of Iraqi election (low security, low turnout, etc.).
- 107 stories about civilian deaths in Iraq.
- 123 stories noting Vice President Cheney's admission that he had underestimated the task of reconstruction.

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- 118 stories about complicated and strained relations between the U.S. and Europe.
- 121 stories discussing the possibility of an American pullout.
- 27 stories about sabotage of Iraqi oil infrastructure.

As against all this, the good news made a pathetic showing:

- 16 stories about security successes in the fight against insurgents.
- 7 stories about positive developments relating to elections.
- 73 stories about the return to Iraq of stolen antiquities.[1]

Obviously, then, the reporters and their editors in the mainstream media have been working overtime to show how badly things have been going for us in Iraq. Meanwhile, the op-ed pundits, the academic theorists, and the armchair generals have chimed in with analyses blaming it all on the incompetence of the President and his appointees. By now, the proposition that the aftermath of the invasion has been marked by one disastrous blunder after another is accepted without question or qualification by just about everyone: open opponents of the Bush Doctrine eager to prove that they were right to denounce the invasion; Democrats whose main objective is to discredit the Bush administration; and erstwhile supporters who have lost heart and are looking for a way to justify their desertion.

But the charge of incompetence has also been hurled by strong supporters of the Bush Doctrine in general and of the invasion of Iraq in particular, whose purpose is to prod the people running the operation into doing a better job. The most authoritative such supporter, Eliot A. Cohen of Johns Hopkins, has expressed a

> desire—barely controlled—to slap the highly educated fool who, having no soldier friends or family, once explained to me that mistakes happen in all wars, and that the casualties are not really all that high, and that I really shouldn't get exercised about them.

Now, this person may well have deserved a slap for being presumptuous toward a distinguished military historian, or for insensitivity in downplaying casualties when speaking to the father of an infantry officer on his way to Iraq. But at the risk of exposing myself as another highly educated fool, I must confess that I too think we need to be reminded that mistakes happen in all wars, and that the casualties in this one are very low by any historical standard.

Before measuring Iraq in these two respects, I want to look more closely at some of the actions taken by the Bush administration that are universally accepted as mistakes, and to begin by pointing out that the main one is based on an outright falsification of the facts. This is the accusation that no thought was given to what would happen once we got to Baghdad and no plans were therefore made for dealing with the aftermath of the combat phase. Yet the plain truth is that much thought was given to, and many plans were made for dealing with, horrors that everyone expected to happen and then, mercifully, did not. Among these were: house-to-house fighting to take Baghdad; the flight of a million or more refugees; the setting of the oil fields afire; and the outbreak of a major civil war.

As for the insurgency, even if its dimensions had accurately been foreseen, it would still have been impossible to eliminate it in short order. To cite Eliot Cohen himself:

> If the insurgencies in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, Sri Lanka, and Kashmir continue, what reason do we have to expect this one to end so soon?

A related group of alleged "mistakes" turn out on closer inspection to be judgment calls, concerning which it is possible for reasonable men to differ. The most widely circulated of these—especially among supporters of the war on the Right—is that there were too few American "boots on the ground" to mount an effective campaign against the insurgency. Perhaps. And yet the key factor in fighting a terrorist insurgency is not the number of troops deployed against it but rather the amount and quality of the intelligence that can be obtained from infiltrating its ranks and from questioning prisoners (a task made all the more difficult for us by the campaign here at home to define torture down to the point where it would become illegal to subject even a captured terrorist to generally accepted methods of interrogation).

[1] Chrenkoff adds: "[M]any stories are 'duplicates' of wire reports from AP, Reuters, and others, but that's precisely the point: if a negative story from the AP is picked up by hundreds of newspapers around the world, then the story's penetration of the global news market is much greater than another story published in just one local newspaper. This, by the way, cuts both ways: if a wire service writes a positive story, that [too] gets syndicated worldwide (in fact most of the 73 positive stories above about the return of stolen treasures are such duplicates)—except that it's quite rare for a news wire service to have a good-news story."

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Finally, there are "mistakes" that were actually choices between two evils—choices that had to be made when it was by no means obvious which was the lesser of the two. The best example here is the policy of "de-Baathification." This led to a disbanding of the Iraqi army, whose embittered Sunni members were then putatively left with nothing to do but volunteer their services to the insurgency. Yet allowing Saddam Hussein's thugs to continue controlling the army would have embittered the Shiites and the Kurds instead, both of whom had suffered greatly at the hands of the Sunni minority. Is it self-evident that this would have been better for us or for Iraq?

However, even if I were to concede for the sake of argument that every one of these accusations was justified, I would still contend that they amounted to chump change when stacked up against the mistakes that were made in World War II—a war conducted by acknowledged giants like Roosevelt and Churchill.[2] And I would still say, as I have said before, that the number of American casualties in Iraq is minimal as compared with the losses suffered in past wars.[3] Similarly, the mistakes—again assuming they were mistakes rather than debatable judgment calls—committed in the first year after the fall of Saddam were relatively inconsequential when measured against those made in the aftermath of the Allied victories over Germany and Japan.

SEVERAL IRAQI bloggers, and many letters written by American soldiers in the field that have found their way onto the Internet, paint a very different picture. Like Arthur Chrenkoff, these close-range observers do not overlook the persistence of major problems, and they do not deny that we still have a long way to go before Iraq becomes secure, stable, and democratic. But they document with great detail the amazing progress that has been made, even under the gun of Islamofascist terrorism, in building—from scratch—the political morale of a country ravaged by "post-totalitarian stress disorder," in setting up the institutional foundations of a federal republic, in getting the economy moving, and in reconstructing the physical infrastructure.

The columnist Max Boot, who has himself been free with charges of incompetence, and who takes the position that we should have put more troops into Iraq, can (like Eliot Cohen) see clearly through his own reservations to provide a good summary of the situation as it now stands:

> For starters, one can point to two successful elections . . . , on January 30 and October 15 [2005], in which the majority of Iraqis braved insurgent threats to vote. The constitutional referendum in October was particularly significant because it marked the first wholesale engagement of Sunnis in the political process. . . . This is big news. The most disaffected group in Iraq is starting to realize that it must achieve its objectives through ballots, not bullets.[4]

Moving on to the economy, Boot (relying on a Brookings Institution report) tells us that "for all the insurgents' attempts to sabotage the Iraqi economy," per-capita income has doubled since 2003 and is now 30-percent higher than it was before the war; that the Iraqi economy is projected to grow at a whopping 16.8 percent in 2006; and that there are five times more cars on the streets than in Saddam Hussein's day, five times more telephone subscribers, and 32 times more Internet users.

Finally, Boot points out that whereas not a single independent media outlet existed in Iraq before 2003, there are now 44 commercial TV stations, 72 radio stations, and more than 100 newspapers.

To all of this we can add the 3,404 public schools, 304 water and sewage projects, 257 fire and police stations, and 149 public-health facilities that had been built as of September 2005, with another 921 such projects currently under construction.

As for the military front, a November 2005 report by the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) cites an example of what is being accomplished by American troops:

> In the recent Operation Steel Curtain on the Syrian border, our troops detained more than 1,000 suspected insurgents. One hundred weapons caches were found and cleared. Since January, 116 of Zarqawi's lieutenants have been killed or captured.

The CPD report also notes the steady strengthening of the Iraqi armed forces, and the increasing

[2] Tim Cavanaugh, in a posting on the website of *Reason* magazine that I have quoted in the past, has offered a partial list of such blunders and the lives that were lost because of them: "American Marines were slaughtered at Tarawa because the pre-invasion bombardment of the island was woefully deficient. Hundreds of American paratroopers were killed by American anti-aircraft fire during landings in Italy—for that matter the entire campaign up the Italian boot was an obvious waste of time, resources, and lives that prevented the western Allies from getting seriously into the war until the middle of 1944. . . . In late 1944, Allied commanders failed to anticipate that the Germans would attack through Belgium despite their having done so in 1914 and 1940." In brief, Cavanaugh concludes, "On any given week, World War II offered more [foul-ups] and catastrophes than anything that has been seen in postwar Iraq."

[3] In World War II, 405,399; in Korea, 36,574; in Vietnam, 58,209.

[4] As I write, it looks very much as though the same trend will continue into the election scheduled for December 15, when a new parliament empowered to form a four-year government will be chosen.

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degree of responsibility they are assuming in the fight against the insurgency:

> [Since July] Iraq's armed forces . . . have added 22 new battalions, and 5,500 police-service personnel have been trained and equipped (as have some 2,000 special-police commanders). Coalition senior officers report that 80 Iraqi battalions now are able to fight alongside our troops and 36 are "generally able to conduct independent operations." More than 20 of the coalition's forward-operating bases have been turned over to the Iraqi army.

The CPD supports the campaign in Iraq. Anthony H. Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies is (to put it mildly) unfriendly to the Bush Doctrine and all its works. But Cordesman concurs with the CPD assessment. Citing slightly different statistics, he notes

> continued increase in the number of Iraqi units able to take the lead in combat operations against the insurgency . . . [p]rogress of Iraqi units in assuming responsibility for the battle space . . . [and] continued increase in the number of units and individuals trained, equipped, and formed into operational status.

What this means in concrete terms is laid out by *Newsweek*'s Fareed Zakaria, also no great admirer of how the Bush administration has conducted the Iraq campaign:

> For two years, when reporters would ask how it was possible that the mightiest military in history could not secure a five-kilometer stretch of road, the military responded with long, jargon-filled lectures. . . . Then one day this summer the military was ordered to secure the road. . . . Presto. Using Iraqi forces, the road was secured. Similar strategies have made cities like Najaf, Mosul, Tal Afar, and even Falluja much safer today than they were a year ago.

Why is there so little public awareness of these things? One young reporter, who proudly proclaims his membership in the mainstream media, has been only too happy to provide an explanation:

> As long as American soldiers are getting killed nearly every day, we're not going to be giving much coverage to the opening of multimillion dollar sewage projects. American lives are worth more than Iraqi shit.

Observe, in this clever and brutal formulation, the professed concern with American casualties. From it, one might imagine that the statement is worlds away from the hostility to American military power—and to America in general—that pervaded the radical Left in the 1960's and that in a milder liberal mutation came to be known as the "post-Vietnam syndrome." And it is certainly true that the antiwar movement spawned by Vietnam rarely had a tear to shed for the American lives that were being lost there. But the newfound tenderness toward our troops in Iraq does not in the least reflect a change in attitude toward the use of force by the United States. To the contrary, the relentless harping on American casualties by the mainstream media is part of an increasingly desperate effort to portray Iraq *as* another Vietnam: a foolish and futile (if not immoral and illegal) resort to military power in pursuit of a worthless (if not unworthy) goal.

Mark Twain once famously said that reports of his death were greatly exaggerated. So it was, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, with the post-Vietnam syndrome. During those early weeks, a number of commentators were quick to proclaim the birth of an entirely new era in American history. What December 7, 1941 had done to the isolationism of old, they announced, September 11, 2001 had done to the Vietnam syndrome. Politically speaking, it was dead, and the fallout from the Vietnam war—namely, the hostility to America and especially to American military power—would follow it into the grave.

As is evident from the coverage of Iraq in the mainstream media, such pronouncements were more than a little premature: the Vietnam syndrome is still alive and well. But equally apparent is that the reporters and editors to whom it is a veritable religion understand very clearly that success in Iraq *could* deal the Vietnam syndrome a mortal blow. Little wonder, then, that they have so resolutely tried to ignore any and all signs of progress—or, when that becomes impossible, to dismiss them as so much "shit."

This, however, is at least a kind of tribute to our progress, if a perverse one. The same cannot be said of the opponents of the Bush Doctrine in the universities and think tanks, who are unwilling even to acknowledge that more and better things are happening in Iraq and the broader Middle East than are dreamed of in their philosophy.

Take, for example, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who left the academy to serve as Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser and is now a professor again. In a recently published piece entitled "American Debacle," Brzezinski began by accusing George W.

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Bush of "suicidal statecraft," went on to pronounce the intervention in Iraq (along with everything else this President has done) a total disaster, and ended by urging that we withdraw from that country "perhaps even as early as next year"—i.e., 2006. Unlike the late Senator Aiken of Vermont, who once proposed that we declare victory in Vietnam and then get out, Brzezinski wants to declare *defeat* in Iraq and then get out. This, he mysteriously assures us, will help restore "the legitimacy of America's global role."

Now I have to admit that I find it a little rich that George W. Bush should be accused of "suicidal statecraft" by, of all people, the man who in the late 1970's helped shape a foreign policy that emboldened the Iranians to seize and hold American hostages while his boss in the Oval Office stood impotently by for more than six months before finally authorizing a rescue operation so inept that it only compounded our national humiliation. And where was Brzezinski—famed at the time for his anti-Communism—when the President he served congratulated us on having overcome our "inordinate fear of Communism"? Where was Brzezinski—known far and wide for his hard-line determination to resist Soviet expansionism—when Cyrus Vance, the then Secretary of State, declared that the Soviet Union and the United States had "similar dreams and aspirations," and when Carter himself complacently informed us that containment was no longer necessary? And how was it that, despite daily meetings with Brzezinski, Carter remained so blind to the nature of the Soviet regime that the invasion of Afghanistan, as he himself would admit, taught him more in a week about the nature of that regime than he had managed to learn in an entire lifetime? Had the cat gotten Brzezinski's tongue in the three years leading up to that invasion—the same tongue he now wags with such confidence at George W. Bush?[5]

BUT EVEN if Brzezinski's record over the past 30 years did not disqualify him from dispensing advice on how to conduct American foreign policy, this diatribe against Bush would by itself be enough. For here he looks over the Middle East, and what does he see? He sees the United States being "stamped as the imperialistic successor to Britain and as a partner of Israel in the military repression of the Arabs." This may not be fair, he covers himself by adding; but not a single word does he say to indicate that the British *created* the very despotisms the United States is now trying to replace with democratic regimes, or that George W. Bush is the first American President to have come out openly for a Palestinian state.

Again Brzezinski looks over the Middle East, and what does he see? He sees the treatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib, and by extension Guantanamo, causing the loss of America's "moral standing" as a "country that has stood tall" against "political repression, torture, and other violations of human rights." And that is all he sees—quite as though we never liberated Afghanistan from the theocratic tyranny of the Taliban, or Iraq from the fascist despotism of Saddam Hussein. But how, after all, when it comes to standing tall against "political repression, torture, and other violations of human rights," can such achievements compare with a sanctimonious lecture by Jimmy Carter followed by the embrace of one third-world dictator after another?

Then for a third time Brzezinski looks over the Middle East, and what does he see? He sees more and more sympathy for terrorism, and more and more hatred of America, being generated throughout the region by our actions in Iraq; and in this context, too, that is all he sees. About the momentous encouragement that our actions have given to the forces of reform that never dared act or even speak up before, he is completely silent—though it is a phenomenon that even so inveterate a hater of America as the Lebanese dissident Walid Jumblatt has found himself compelled to recognize. Thus, only a few months after declaring that "the killing of U.S. soldiers in Iraq is legitimate and obligatory," Jumblatt suddenly woke up to what those U.S. soldiers had actually been doing for the world in which he lived:

> It's strange for me to say it, but this process of change has started because of the American invasion of Iraq. I was cynical about Iraq. But when I saw the Iraqi people voting [in January 2005], 8 million of them, it was the start of a new Arab world.

The columnist Michael Barone has listed some of the developments that bear out Jumblatt's judgment:

> [The] progress toward democracy in Iraq is leading Middle Easterners to concentrate on the question of how to build decent governments and decent societies. We can see the results—the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, the first seriously contested elections in Egypt, Libya's giving up WMD's, the Jordanian protests against Abu Musab Zarqawi's recent suicide attacks, and even a bit of reform in Saudi Arabia.

[5] As Thomas Joscelyn reminds us, Brzezinski also wagged it at Ronald Reagan: "If present trends continue," he wrote in 1981, "American foreign policy is likely to be in a state of general crisis by the spring of 1982 . . . causing the global position of the United States to be placed in jeopardy."

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Even in Syria, reports the *Washington Post*'s David Ignatius,

> people talk politics . . . with a passion I haven't heard since the 1980's in Eastern Europe. They're writing manifestos, dreaming of new political parties, trying to rehabilitate old ones from the 1950's.

And not only in Syria. As the democratic activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim who, like Jumblatt, originally opposed the invasion of Iraq, told Ignatius's colleague Jim Hoagland:

> Those [in the Middle East] who believe in democracy and civil society are finally actors . . . [because the invasion of Iraq] has unfrozen the Middle East, just as Napoleon's 1798 expedition did. Elections in Iraq force the theocrats and autocrats to put democracy on the agenda, even if only to fight against us. Look, neither Napoleon nor President Bush could impregnate the region with political change. But they were able to be midwives.

Nor are such changes confined to the political sphere alone. According to a report in the *Economist*, a revulsion against terrorism has begun to spread among Muslim clerics, including some who, like the secular Jumblatt, were only recently applauding its use against Americans:

> Moderate Muslim clerics have grown increasingly concerned at the abuse of religion to justify killing. In Saudi Arabia, numerous preachers once famed for their fighting words now advise tolerance and restraint. Even so rigid a defender of suicide attacks against Israel . . . as Yusuf Qaradawi, the star preacher of the popular al-Jazeera satellite channel, denounces bombings elsewhere and calls on the perpetrators to repent.

Zbigniew Brzezinski may be wrongheaded, but he is neither blind nor stupid. Why, then, his willful silence in the face of all these signs of progress? I can only interpret it as the product of a rising panic. No less than the denizens of the mainstream media, he is desperately struggling to salvage a worldview that, like theirs, should have been but was not killed off by 9/11 and that, like theirs, may well suffer a truly mortal blow if the Bush Doctrine passes through the great test of fire it is undergoing in Iraq.

Brzezinski's worldview is a syncretistic mix of foreign-policy realism (with its emphasis on stability and the sanctity of national borders) and liberal internationalism (with its unshakable faith in compromise, consensus, and international institutions). In this he differs somewhat from another former National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft, a Republican who occupied the office under George W. Bush's father and whose own commitment to the realist perspective is pure and unadulterated.

In spite of this difference, the two men are at one in regarding the war in Iraq as a disastrous distraction from the really important business to which we should be attending in the Middle East—namely, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. In an article published some months before the invasion and entitled "Don't Attack Saddam," Scowcroft wrote:

> Possibly the most dire consequence [of attacking Saddam] would be the effect in the region. The shared view in the region is that Iraq is principally an obsession of the U.S. The obsession of the region, however, is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If we were seen to be turning our backs on that bitter conflict, there would be an explosion of outrage against us.

Evidently he still holds to this view. So does Brzezinski, who attacks "the Bush team" for having transformed "a manageable, though serious, challenge of largely regional origin into an international debacle," and who urges us to get out of Iraq, the sooner the better, so that we can shift our focus back to where it really belongs—"the Israeli-Palestinian peace process."

Well, whether the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is truly "the obsession of the region" or, rather, a screen for other things, it certainly is the obsession of Brzezinski and Scowcroft, as it is of almost everyone else who looks at the Middle East from the so-called realist perspective and to whom stability is the great desideratum. Even from that perspective, however, the non-stop preoccupation with Israel would seem to be warranted only if the conflict with the Palestinians were the main cause of instability throughout the region.

This is indeed what Brzezinski, Scowcroft, and most other members of the realist school believe.[6] Yet the realities to which they are so deferential in the abstract make utter nonsense of this idea. Since the birth of Israel in 1948, there have been some-

[6] But not Henry Kissinger, the leading realist of them all. Even though he is skeptical about the possibility of democratizing the Middle East, Kissinger favored the invasion of Iraq and thinks that victory there is essential. Nor does he believe that the war between the Palestinians and Israel is the most important problem in the world, or even in the Middle East.

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thing like two dozen wars in the Middle East (variously involving Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Iraq) that have had nothing whatever to do with the Jewish state, or with the Palestinians. In one of these alone—the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88—more lives were lost than in all the wars involving Israel put together.

The obsessive animus against Israel goes hand in hand with the overall strategy for dealing with the Middle East that prevailed before 9/11, and to which Brzezinski and Scowcroft are still married, heart and soul and mind. The best and most succinct description of that strategy was given by President Bush himself in explaining why 9/11 had driven him to reject it in favor of a radically different approach:

> For decades free nations tolerated oppression in the Middle East for the sake of stability. In practice, this approach brought little stability and much oppression, so I have changed this policy.

And again:

> In the past, . . . longstanding ties often led us to overlook the faults of local elites. Yet this bargain did not bring stability or make us safe. It merely bought time, while problems festered and ideologies of violence took hold.

We learn from Jeffrey Goldberg of the *New Yorker* that, when Condoleezza Rice quoted these words to Scowcroft (her former mentor), he responded that the policy Bush was rejecting had actually brought us "50 years of peace."[7]

In addition to remaining convinced that the old way of doing things was right, Scowcroft is utterly disdainful of the new approach being followed by George W. Bush, which (as I like to describe it) is to make the Middle East safe for America by making it safe for democracy. "I believe," he told Jeffrey Goldberg, "that you cannot with one sweep of the hand or the mind cast off thousands of years of history." But the despotisms in the Middle East are not thousands of years old, and they were not created by Allah or the Prophet Muhammad. All of them were established after World War I—that is, less than a century ago—by the British and the French.

This being the case, there is nothing "utopian" about the idea that such regimes—planted with shallow roots by two Western powers—could be uprooted with the help of a third Western power, and that a better political system could be put in their place. And, in fact, this is exactly what has been happening before our very eyes in Iraq. In the span of three short years, Iraq, liberated by the United States from the totalitarian tyranny of Saddam Hussein, has taken one giant step after another toward democratization. Yet Scowcroft can still assure us that "you're not going to democratize Iraq," and certainly not "in any reasonable time frame."

As with Brzezinski, so again it seems that nothing else but panic can explain so astonishing a degree of denial.

LIKE THE mainstream media and the theorists in the academy and the think tanks, the Democratic party—fearing that it might be frozen out of power for a very long time to come—is also in a panic over the signs that George W. Bush's new approach to the greater Middle East is on the verge of passing the test of Iraq. Hence the veritable hysteria with which the Democrats have recently tried to delegitimize the war: first by claiming (three years after the fact!) that it had begun with a lie, and then by declaring that it was ending in a defeat. Leaning heavily on the turn in public opinion largely brought about by reports in the mainstream media and the lucubrations of the theorists, the Democrats now joined in by clamoring openly for a withdrawal of American forces from Iraq.[8]

A goodly number of these Democrats (Howard Dean and Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, to name only two) are the "Tories" of today, in the sense of having from the very beginning stood openly and unambiguously against the revolution in foreign policy represented by the Bush Doctrine and now being put to the test in Iraq. But a much larger number of Democrats fit more smoothly into Tom Paine's category of "disguised" Tories. These are the Congressmen and Senators who in their heart of hearts were against the resolution authorizing the President to use force against Saddam Hussein, but who—given the state of public opinion at the time—feared being punished at the polls unless they voted for it. Now, however, with public opinion moving in the other direction, they have been emboldened to "show their heads."

Finally, we have a certain number of Democrats who correspond to "the summer soldiers and the sunshine patriots" of the American Revolu-

[7] What, asked James Taranto of the *Wall Street Journal*, "do you call someone" who can describe the many wars that have been fought in the Middle East in the past five decades as "50 years of peace"? Taranto's sardonic answer: "A 'realist.'"

[8] An honorable exception is Senator Joseph Lieberman, who writes: "What a colossal mistake it would be for America's bipartisan political leadership to choose this moment in history to lose its will and, in the famous phrase, to seize defeat from the jaws of the coming victory." I should also mention that there are Republicans who, as Lieberman rightly says, "are more worried about whether the war will bring them down in next November's elections than they are concerned about how we continue the progress in Iraq in the months and years ahead."

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tion.[9] One of them is Congressman John Murtha, who backed the invasion of Iraq because (to give him the benefit of the doubt) he really thought it was the right thing to do, but who has now bought entirely into the view that all is lost and that the only sensible course is to turn tail:

> The war in Iraq is . . . a flawed policy wrapped in illusion. . . . [O]ur military is suffering. The future of our country is at risk. We cannot continue on the present course. It is evident that continued military action is not in the best interests of the United States of America, the Iraqi people, or the Persian-Gulf region. . . . Our troops have become the primary target of the insurgency. They are united against U.S. forces and we have become a catalyst for violence. U.S. troops are the common enemy of the Sunnis, Saddamists, and foreign jihadists. . . . Our military has done everything that has been asked of them, the U.S. cannot accomplish anything further in Iraq militarily. It is time to bring them home.

It seems never to have occurred to Murtha that talk of this kind could only confuse and demoralize the troops for whose welfare, and for whose sufferings, he expresses such concern. By all accounts, those troops are very proud of what they are accomplishing in Iraq. How then could they not be confounded when a respected Congressman—a former Marine, no less—declares that they have been fighting for nothing, nothing whatsoever, and when for saying so he gets a standing ovation from his fellow Democrats? How could they not be demoralized to be told that there is no point in going on because their very presence in Iraq is making things worse for everyone concerned?[10]

And how, by the same token, could talk of this kind fail to give new heart to the Islamofascist terrorists—just when they are on the run? How could they not be delighted to see the elected representatives of the American people carrying on a heated debate in which the only questions at issue are how quickly to bug out of Iraq, and whether to fix a timetable and a deadline? How could they not feel vindicated when, after being surprised by the fierce reaction of the Americans to 9/11, they now behold fresh evidence for believing that Osama bin Laden was right after all when he called us a paper tiger?

On the other hand, if (as the President intended all along, as he reiterated in his great speech of November 30 at Annapolis, and as is prescribed in the recently declassified "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq") American forces are drawn down only at the rate and to the extent that they can be replaced with similar numbers of Iraqi soldiers and policemen fully capable of taking over, the joy now being felt by the Islamofascists will commensurately be replaced by dread. For no one knows better than they that, once up to snuff and on their own, the new Iraqi forces will be less inhibited than the Americans by moral considerations and accordingly much more ruthless in the way they fight.

Tom Paine grew so disgusted with "the mean principles that are held by the Tories," with the hypocrisy of the disguised Tories, and with the shrinking from hardship of the summer soldiers and the sunshine patriots of 1776-7 that he finally gave up trying to persuade them:

> I have been tender in raising the cry against these men, and used numberless arguments to show them their danger, but it will not do to sacrifice a world to either their folly or their baseness.

And so, "quitting this class of men . . . who see not the full extent of the evil that threatens them," Paine turned "to those who have nobly stood, and are yet determined to stand the matter out," and rested his hopes on them.

These hopes, we know and thank God for it, were not disappointed. And neither will be the hopes of those today who likewise see "the full extent of the evil that threatens" us; who understand the necessity of the war that our country has been waging against it; who recognize the moral, political, and intellectual boldness of how George W. Bush has chosen to fight this war; and who take pride in the nobility of what the United States, at whose birth Tom Paine assisted, is now, more than 200 years later, battling to achieve in Iraq and, in the fullness of time, in the entire region of which Iraq is so crucial a part.

—December 6, 2005

[9] So do liberal intellectuals like David Rieff and Michael Ignatieff, whose support was based on humanitarian grounds. By now, however, they have decided that they were mistaken to think that Bush was either serious enough or sufficiently competent to fulfill the idealistic goals he had enunciated.

[10] The Democrats indignantly deny that they are hurting the morale of our troops, but they have not succeeded in persuading the public. Thus, in a poll taken by RT Strategies, a whopping 70 percent say that Democratic criticism of the war "hurts troop morale—with 44 percent saying morale is hurt 'a lot.'" Even among self-identified Democrats, 55 percent say that criticism hurts morale as against 21 percent who say that it helps. Furthermore, only three out of ten of the people surveyed accept the Democrats' claim that their criticisms are intended to help the war effort, while a majority believe that the motive is to "gain a partisan political advantage."

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"Cast Me Not Off in Old Age"

Eric Cohen & Leon R. Kass

DEATH AND DYING are once again subjects of intense public attention. During his confirmation hearings, Chief Justice John Roberts was grilled about his views on removing life-sustaining treatments from debilitated patients and warned by various liberal Senators not to interfere with the "right to die." In California and Vermont, state legislators are working to legalize assisted suicide, while the Bush administration is trying to restrict the practice by prohibiting doctors from using federally-controlled narcotics to end their patients' lives. All this comes in the aftermath of the bitter fight over Terri Schiavo, a profoundly disabled woman whose husband removed the feeding tube that kept her alive, but only after years of legal battles with Schiavo's parents and myriad political efforts to stop him.

The Schiavo case revealed deep divisions in how Americans view debility and death. Some saw pulling her feeding tube as an act of mercy, others as an act of murder. Some believed she possessed equal human dignity and deserved equal care despite her total lack of self-awareness; others believed keeping her alive year after year was itself an indignity. For many, what mattered most was discerning "what Terri would have wanted"; for many others, what mattered was loving the needy woman on the television screen, not abandoning her when the burdens of care seemed too great.

Yet the Schiavo case was also highly unusual—involving a young woman, afflicted suddenly, in the prime of her life. In our aging society, most severe disability involves instead the frail elderly, who gradually but inexorably decline into enfeeblement and dementia, often leaving grown children to preside over their extended demise. The greatest challenges involve not only deciding when to let loved ones die, but figuring out how to care every day for those who can no longer care for themselves.

Although growing old is a natural part of being human, the circumstances in which most Americans age and die are increasingly "unnatural" and surely unprecedented. Longer life expectancies and lower birth rates lead to the graying of society; smaller and less stable families weaken the ties that bind. Death comes on the doctor's watch and in high-tech surroundings, almost always following years of chronic illness, typically preceded by decisions about further medical intervention, increasingly made on behalf of patients incapable of making decisions for themselves. Caregivers often do not know how to honor those who have lost their most human qualities.

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Thanks to medicine's prowess in sustaining life on the edge, it is harder than ever to know when it is "time to die."

II

The miseries of aging and decline were hardly unknown to our ancestors, and are eloquently attested in the biblical plea from which we have taken our title. When asked if he would choose to live over again, Thomas Jefferson said yes, but only between ages twenty-five and sixty. Thereafter, he wrote, "the powers of life are sensibly on the wane, sight becomes dim, hearing dull, memory constantly enlarging its frightful blank and parting with all we have ever seen or known, spirits evaporate, bodily debility creeps on palsying every limb, and so faculty after faculty quits us, and where then is life?" Yet in Jefferson's time, most people never reached this extended period of debility, because they died suddenly in the nursery of life or at the peak of their flourishing. Living to old age was the dream of the vulnerable many; living with old age was the problem of the fortunate few.

In developed societies today, by contrast, old age is the norm. Average life expectancy in the United States is now seventy-eight years and rising (up from forty-seven in 1900), and those over age eighty-five are already the fastest growing segment of the population. People are not only living longer; they are staying healthier well into their sixties, seventies, and eighties, and they expect to enjoy many years of vigorous retirement. On balance, it is a wonderful time to be old, and the democratization and expansion of old age are among modernity's greatest achievements.

Yet the coming of the mass geriatric society is also a source of tremendous anxiety. Americans worry about the soaring costs of Social Security and Medicare, the collapse of private pensions, the shortage of good nursing homes, and the potential clash between the young and the old over resources and priorities. Our deepest worries are personal: we dread spending our final years in a degraded state, resented by caregivers or abandoned by loved ones, of little use to ourselves, never mind to others.

Such worries are not unjustified. Although most Americans can expect to live healthily well past sixty-five, many will also live long enough to endure a prolonged period of frailty. According to a recent Rand study, roughly 40 percent of deaths in the United States are now preceded by a period of enfeeblement, debility, and (often) dementia lasting up to a decade. Prominent are those suffering from Alzheimer's disease, a condition that steadily destroys the mind and body, strips individuals of self-awareness and self-control, and often requires that they spend their final years in an institution, incapable of feeding or bathing themselves or of using a toilet. Today, over 4 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's; by mid-century, that number is expected to rise to over 13 million—all of them requiring many years of extensive, expensive, and exhausting full-time care.

Yet precisely as the need is rising, the pool of available family caregivers is dwindling. Families are smaller, less stable, and more geographically spread out. Most women are now employed outside the home. The well-to-do can afford to hire professionals, but there are already shortages of geriatricians and nurses. Those jobs requiring great humanity but offering little paid reward—like feeding Alzheimer's patients or changing bedpans—are greatly undersubscribed.

All this creates a perfect social storm. As the number of retired baby-boomers expands, they will seek to augment existing social programs for the elderly, creating novel fiscal challenges for Medicare and Medicaid. Politically, long-term-care benefits might become the sequel to prescription-drug benefits—and far costlier. At the same time, the burdens of caring for needy elders will test the strength of already fragile modern families. Those in middle age may wonder about the wisdom (or duty) of sacrificing so much, for so long, on behalf of lives that seem so diminished. And they may come to believe that the death of the elderly is preferable to life in what seems like such a miserable condition.

In the face of such burdens, two "solutions" appeal today to different strains of American pragmatism. Both are seductive, and both, in instructive ways, are misguided.

III

In an age of medical triumphs, it is not surprising that our first approach to the dilemmas of old age is to think we can cure our way out of them. Commemorating the 40th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid last July, Dr. Mark B. McClellan, the top official at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said that "Medicare can do so much more than give you dignity in old age." It can, he continued, extend life; it can improve health; it can save money by preventing and curing debilitating diseases.

This is the medical gospel of healthy aging. In its

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triumphalist vision, things for older Americans are, in McClellan's words, "always getting better." Nearly everyone in public life embraces this faith in the saving powers of medical progress, although conservatives tend to emphasize drug development and free-market medicine while liberals emphasize embryonic stem-cell research and cheap drugs from Canada.

Many of McClellan's reform initiatives are quite sensible, including the promotion of preventive health measures, enhanced "customer service" for Medicare recipients, and new efforts to improve post-surgical care. And the twin goals of attacking debility and caring for the debilitated are not intrinsically or necessarily opposed to each other. But it is also foolish to act and speak as if medical progress (whether in prevention or in cure) will liberate us from the realities of decline, debility, and death or from the unavoidable duties of caregiving at the end of life.

First, medical progress often leads to *greater* debility in later years even as—and precisely because—it cures deadly diseases at earlier ages. This is the paradox of modern aging: *we are vigorous longer and we are incapacitated longer*. To be sure, no one wants to turn back the clock to a time when mothers and children died regularly in childbirth, when infectious diseases decimated helpless communities, when heart disease was largely undiagnosed and untreated, and when a diagnosis of cancer meant swift and certain death. But severing medicine's sweetest fruits from its sourest consequences may prove impossible.

Second, to see medical progress as a "cost saver" is simplistic at best. Medical care is more expensive than ever precisely because we can do so much more to diagnose and treat disease, and Medicare and Medicaid are costlier because more people are living longer. Even if curing today's diseases becomes less expensive over time, no one knows the cost of dealing with the diseases that will replace them. Only if people live free of illness to the very end and then die suddenly will medical progress really result in cheaper medicine. Otherwise, it will continue to purchase greater longevity and better health at an increased overall expense.

Finally, there is something weird about treating old age as a time of life when things should always be "getting better." While aging affords some people new possibilities for learning and "growth," it also means—eventually and inevitably—the loss of one's vital powers. Some people may ride horses or climb mountains into their seventies and eighties, just like in the commercials for anti-arthritis medication, but such idealized images offer a partial and misleading picture of the realities of senescence, that series of small dyings on the way to death. Endless chatter about "healthy aging" is at bottom a form of denial. Ultimately, the nursing home refutes the dream of limitless progress toward ageless bodies, and America will surely be building many more nursing homes in the years ahead.

None of this implies ingratitude for the blessings of medical progress—including current research aimed at curing age-related diseases like Alzheimer's. But in fueling our love of youthfulness and limitless life, and our hatred of senescence and decline, the campaign for healthy aging also subtly encourages us to devalue the need to give care and comfort to those we cannot cure. When, moreover, aging does not bring the good tidings we were promised, we may seek instead an even more absolute control over death and come to embrace the pseudo-mastery of "death-on-demand" as the cure for our unconquerable miseries.

IV

THE GOALS of mastery and control in the face of death also lie behind the second prominent "solution" to the dilemmas of aging and debility: the legal gospel of the living will.

During the national drama over Terri Schiavo, the real problem, in the eyes of many, was that her wishes were never put clearly in writing; the moral lesson was therefore that everyone should prepare a living will, saying exactly what should be done if and when incapacity strikes. Living wills are as "vital as regular exams," editorialized the *San Antonio Express-News*. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "The case of Terri Schiavo may have one important legacy: spurring more people to talk with family members and put down in writing what they would want if they become incapacitated." And so on, in virtually every major newspaper in the country.

This enthusiasm for living wills did not emerge overnight. In the 1960's and 70's, many people began to fear the prospect of living indefinitely on machines in a profoundly diminished condition. They feared the indignity of becoming a permanent burden on loved ones, a living body without a life, a helpless ward of the nursing home. To prevent this dehumanizing possibility, people began putting their treatment preferences in writing, to be followed by surrogates in the event of serious illness or injury. During the 1970's, state legislatures and courts began to extend formal

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recognition to these "living wills." Since then, this legal instrument has gained a passionate chorus of defenders and advocates—including lawyers, doctors, hospitals, patient-advocacy groups, and most bioethicists.

At first glance, the case for living wills seems compelling, especially in a nation that places such a high value on individual autonomy. Living wills extend our irrevocable right to speak for ourselves, even when our powers of speech and reason are gone. They honor our preferences regarding how we wish to die, by allowing us to dictate all future medical interventions. They protect debilitated patients from having other people's wishes imposed on them, whether in the form of overtreatment or undertreatment. They give family members explicit permission to fight on or let go, especially in medically ambiguous situations where they might otherwise be incapable of making morally wrenching decisions about life and death. They protect financial resources from being squandered, whether on heroic interventions made in crisis or on seemingly endless long-term care.

But after three decades, there is increasing evidence that living wills have failed to meet these practical objectives. The social-science data—compiled by Carl Schneider, Rebecca Dresser, and many others—are compelling. To begin with, most people do not have living wills, despite a very active campaign to promote them. In 2001, the completion rate nationwide remained under 25 percent, and even the chronically ill do not draft living wills in significantly higher numbers. Then, too, even those who complete living wills often do not express clear treatment preferences, or, unable to comprehend the clinical conditions they might face in the future, leave vague instructions or change their preferences depending on how a given medical situation is described. To complicate matters further, living wills often do not get transmitted to those making medical decisions; in one study, only 26 percent of medical charts contained accurate information about a living will, and only 16 percent included the actual document.

Finally, and most telling, the written instructions contained in living wills—even when they are consulted!—often have little effect on the actual decisions made. In one study, decisions made by surrogates using a pre-drafted living will were no more likely to reflect the patient's prior wishes than decisions made by family members judging on their own. What mattered most was a lifetime of familiarity: family members predict patient preferences better than physicians, and primary-care doctors better than anonymous experts reading legal documents.

The shortcomings of living wills have still deeper roots. The animating ideas behind them—preserving autonomy until the end, giving precedence to prior wishes over present needs—are deeply problematic. Imagine, for example, a professor who has watched his own father die of Alzheimer's and vows never to live like that, never to burden a child with his own care, never to behave shamefully the way his father did in the throes of that terrible disease. So he drafts a living will stating clearly that, once he starts to have trouble recognizing his daughter, he is to receive no more medical interventions. When the time comes, should the daughter really leave him to die when he contracts a urinary infection, rather than give him antibiotics? Is she simply to be the executor of her father's wishes, or is she first of all a moral agent with her own moral responsibilities?

And what about the professor himself? One can admire his desire to spare his child the burdens of long-term care and the pain of witnessing his extended demise. But he is probably deluded in thinking that seizing an earlier occasion for his death will prove less painful to her. One can also admire his willingness to confront mortality rather than pretend he will live forever. But he is assuredly mistaken in believing that he can control every detail of his own future care with a voice from the past—or that he can rightly assess the worth of a diminished future life from the height of his own flourishing. No less admirable is his pride in his *self*-control. But being human also means accepting and enduring one's own vulnerabilities and dependencies.

When the time does finally come, no legal instructions written in advance—no matter how perfect—can replace the need for loving and devoted caregivers. Inasmuch as the gospel of the living will denies this truth, it perpetuates an illusion of perfect independence, isolating individuals at the very moment when they need others most of all.

As it happens, this unavoidable reliance on others is recognized by a different—and superior—form of advance directive: the "proxy directive" or "health-care power of attorney." Instead of dictating various potential courses of action, it empowers surrogates to make medical decisions on our behalf, naming them as the parties with whom doctors and nurses must deal when we cannot speak for ourselves. Reflecting the reality of human interdependence, this approach clarifies

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the responsibility of physicians and family members to make judgments for patients whose own judgment is gone.

All that having been said, however, trusting others makes sense only if there are others who are trustworthy—willing to care, able to care, wise enough to care well. Sad to say, this is often not the case—either in medicine or in families.

V

ONE OF the ironies of medical progress is that we stand in greatest need of family doctors and general practitioners just as medical super-specialization has turned them into endangered species. Especially for the frail elderly, comprehensive and continuous care is virtually impossible to obtain. One doctor treats our failing heart, another our wheezy lungs, a third our sluggish bowels, a fourth our tired blood, and a fifth our fraying nerves, but often no physician is willing or able to look after *us*. In eldercare and especially in nursing homes, burnout is common and high turnover rates prevent continuity of care, not only from doctors but also from nurses and social workers. Even the wealthy are not protected. As they age, many will outlive their physicians, and replacement doctors will have no familiarity with their lives. If trustworthy and dependable long-term care is to be had, only the steadfast efforts of devoted family members can secure it—or, in many instances, provide it themselves.

Yet, in an aging society, we stand in greatest need of families just as family life has been most weakened. There are the well-known and widespread phenomena of divorce and family rupture, lower birth rates, geographical mobility, and the weakened social importance of extended family. Moreover, many of today's old people—and many aging baby boomers—never had children, and many more have little claim on their children's loyalty. When a neglectful parent needs care from the children he neglected, the sins of the absent father or rejecting mother are often repaid in kind.

Even in the best of intact families, the picture is sobering. When a husband or wife acquires Alzheimer's disease or some other progressive disability, the front line of care is generally manned by the spouse—if he or she is healthy enough for the task. Fidelity between spouses, displayed most poignantly when the marriage bed becomes a nursing station, is anticipated in the wedding vow, wherein husband and wife pledge their mutual devotion "for better, for worse." However invisible to them when they choose to marry, caregiving at the end of life is part of the marital vocation, and many a husband and wife rises to the occasion with strength and dignity.

Eventually, however, even the most blessed and long-lived marriages produce a widow or a widower, and then the prospects of faithful long-term care become truly uncertain. Studies indicate that only someone with three or more daughters or daughters-in-law can reasonably expect to escape institutionalization for long-term care. This is not the consequence of mere filial ingratitude or heartless indifference. In truth, it is passing strange for a whole society of adult children to be summoned to care on a long-term basis for those who once cared for them.

In contrast to caring for the young, the care of the elderly by their grown children is unrewarded by the joyful experience of seeing a new life unfold and flourish. Even in the best cases, when children gladly discharge their obligation to "honor thy father and mother," there is unavoidable sadness and indignity. As the Yiddish proverb has it, "When the father helps the son, both laugh. When the son helps the father, both cry." No child wants to uncover the nakedness of his father or mother. No mother or father wants to stand incompetent before the children.

More fundamentally, there is also a disruption of the naturally forward-looking thrust of intergenerational life. The burdens of caring for one's parents, and of being cared for by one's children, risk obscuring the stake that both the old and the middle-aged have in the rising third generation. For a grown child best "repays" the gifts of his parents by raising children of his own, and grandparents have a greater interest in seeing grandchildren flourish than in maximizing the comfort of their own last days.

In these circumstances, trying to discern what is required by intergenerational fidelity can give rise to anguishing dilemmas. A daughter raising young children of her own might see the pneumonia afflicting her father, who already suffers from advanced Alzheimer's, as nature's way of restoring the generational balance, to be accepted with sorrow rather than opposed with penicillin. Or, conversely, she might wish to demonstrate to her children what it signifies to love another in his gravest need, and to appreciate the blessings of health in the face of the miseries of disease.

Many people experience caring for aged parents as a vocation—a duty lovingly fulfilled, giving life its true meaning. Many others experience it as a curse—a duty grudgingly accepted (or not), rob-

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bing life of its true pleasures. In some cases, the demands of caring for the elderly reveal the family at its best, faithful to the end; in others, the very presence of the helpless elderly suffocates everything else in family life. Yet what would family become if the old were abandoned in the name of the young, or the weak left to die in the name of the flourishing?

In the years ahead, the greatest dilemmas will confront the middle-aged of the middle class—those who are wealthy enough to have choices (like hiring paid professionals), yet limited enough to make every choice a real sacrifice (like having to forgo extra income to stay at home with an aging mother, or depleting retirement savings to pay for a father's assisted living). Compelled to make such choices, even the most devoted may feel both resentment and guilt—resentment at what they must give up, guilt that they may not have done enough. Inevitably, the questions will arise: are these sacrifices "worth it"? Are we really helping Dad by extending a life that seems so diminished? Is that life still worth living?

VI

Until now, our society has been largely spared such questions. And when they have been raised, usually in private, we have had solid moral answers, backed by our religious and political traditions as well as by the venerable teachings of medical ethics. When it comes to the right to life and human care, most Americans are committed—at least in the abstract—to the view that all human beings are "created equal." And since the days of Hippocrates, physicians for their part have eschewed judging the worth of the lives they treat and have refused "to give a deadly drug if asked" or even "to make a suggestion to that effect." Never are the disabled deemed unworthy of medical or humane care; on the contrary, their need for care is precisely the reason we are obliged to provide it.

But as we saw in the Schiavo debate, this general agreement regarding equal human worth can disappear in certain cases. Although many continue to believe that every human life, regardless of debility, possesses equal dignity, others now argue openly that equal treatment for all is best advanced by not diverting precious resources to the severely disabled. Still others believe that the indignities of old age—especially dementia—belie all sanctimonious talk of "equal worth."

Among these people are the advocates of euthanasia or mercy killing. For the time being, America seems immune to embracing this particular "solution" to the burdens of an aging society. Even in those states—like California and Vermont—that have considered joining Oregon in legalizing assisted suicide, the justification is "personal choice," not a category of human beings officially defined by hospitals or the state as "life unworthy of living" or "better off dead." At the same time, however, more and more commentators are deploring the amount of money spent on medical care for people near the end of life. As the American population ages, we can expect to hear even more talk of people with "low quality of life," unworthy of the resources "wasted" on them. What begins today as a campaign to give individuals a right to ease themselves out of life can easily turn into a campaign to get the enfeebled and demented to exercise their "right to die," or, since they are unable to do the deadly deed themselves, to "exercise it for them."

Against this danger, the assertion that "life is sacred and should always be sustained" will prove an insufficient defense. Indeed, even those who pledge their belief in the sanctity of every human being will often wonder whether intervening medically really benefits the life they hold to be so precious. Is it love or is it cruelty, for instance, to cure the pneumonia in an elderly person suffering from a painful form of terminal cancer—especially one so demented that the mitigating comforts of family and friendship cannot be appreciated? Is it love or is it cruelty to extend a life marked by incontinence of bladder and bowel, uncontrollable outbursts of rage, or psychophysical misery caused by Alzheimer's? Is it love or is it cruelty to force a patient with mild dementia to continue kidney dialysis that he vigorously resists, knowing that he cannot understand either how the dialysis can help him or that ceasing treatment will bring imminent death? Faced with these painful choices, and in moments of weakness, hastening death's arrival may seem the compassionate thing to do.

Traditional medical ethics, ever mindful of this temptation, has been very clear about the duty to resist it: never to kill, always to care. If doctors and others are faithfully to benefit the life the patient still has, they cannot sit in ultimate judgment of its worth, and cannot ever think that lethal intervention is an acceptable "therapeutic option." This holds true even for those (non-demented) patients who knowingly ask doctors or family members to help them die—whether in the present because they are suffering now, or in the future because they cannot bear the thought of living with dementia.

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But traditional medical ethics has also long taught that benefiting the life a debilitated person still has does not mean taking every possible medical action to extend it. Senescence leads inevitably to death, medicine or no medicine. And so, while "active killing" may be incompatible with true caregiving, "letting die" is always part of it. In this reasoning, life-sustaining treatment may be—and often should be—forgone or terminated if the interventions themselves impose undue burdens on the patient or interfere with the comfortable death of someone irretrievably dying. Guidance in this area comes from distinguishing between the burdens of a treatment (imposed by caregivers and for which they are thus responsible) and the burdens of living with a terrible disease (imposed by nature and for which they are not responsible).

Yet as we enter the mass geriatric society, it is clear that our new technological capacities are putting pressure on these sensible distinctions. A century ago, Dr. William Osler could write: "Pneumonia may well be called the friend of the aged. Taken off by it in an acute, short, not often painful illness, the old man escapes these cold gradations of decay so distressing to himself and to his friends." Today, thanks to antibiotics, the aged have no natural friends—or few that are not more commonly regarded as enemies. Life-sustaining interventions, if effective and not especially burdensome, have come to be regarded as standard care and morally obligatory. As a result, well-meaning and morally sound decisions to treat intervening illnesses—like curing the professor's urinary infection despite his living will—can make us complicit in the continuing miseries and degradations of those we love.

Here then is the most poignant dilemma faced by caregivers: not wishing to condemn the worth of people's lives, yet not wanting to bind them to the rack of their growing misery; not wishing to say they are better off dead, yet not wanting always to oppose their going hither. Under these circumstances, with no simple formulas for finding the best course of action, individuals and families must find their way, case by case and moment to moment, often with only unattractive options to choose from and knowing that whatever path they choose, they will feel the weight of the path not chosen.

VII

EVEN IF the burdens of aging and death are always borne most fully by individuals and families, how we age and die are not only private matters. Our communal practices and social policies shape the environments in which aging and caregiving take place—not only in moments of crisis, when life-or-death decisions need to be made, but in the long days of struggle and everyday attendance. Faith-based institutions and community groups support families in meeting those needs they cannot meet alone. Programs like Medicaid assist those who are old and impoverished, in need of nursing that they cannot themselves afford.

In the years ahead, this need for social supports will only increase, especially if we are to fight the temptation to turn caregiving entirely into a state responsibility. Affordable insurance, respite relief for caregivers, reliable and reimbursable home services, technologies to assist in giving basic bodily care—all these and more can enhance the economic and social supports of those coping with extended debility. Recruitment of volunteers to aid in eldercare is a perfect objective for the many groups, both liberal and conservative, interested in promoting civic engagement and renewing civil society.

But we cannot pretend that individual families, or society as a whole, will have unlimited resources, particularly in a populace with more elderly persons and fewer young workers. Americans will need to make hard choices among competing goods, and to confront the limits of even our own affluent society. And even then the biggest challenges before us will not be economic in nature but cultural and spiritual—how to deepen our understanding of what it means to age and die, how to combat the overly medicalized view of old age that now dominates our attitudes and our institutions, how to recover the wisdom contained in the human life cycle.

As we noted earlier, Americans increasingly regard old age as a bundle of needs and problems demanding solution, or as a time of life whose meaning is defined largely by the struggle to stay healthy and fit. This outlook has generated discontent with the life cycle itself, producing an insatiable desire for more and more medical miracles, and creating the fantasy that we can transcend our limitations—or that death itself may be pushed back indefinitely. More deeply, this same outlook has engendered the illusion that independence is the whole truth about our lives, causing us to undervalue those attachments and obligations that bind and complete us.

We live already in a world in which the life cycle has largely lost its ethical meaning. Aware as we may be that we are on a solitary journey that ends

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inevitably in the grave, few of us take our bearings from nature's eternal teaching that there is a time to be born and a time to die. We learn little from the rhythm of growth and decay, everything in its season, our own finitude transcended and redeemed by generation upon generation of new birth and renewal, transforming each singular finite trajectory into a permanently recurring cycle of life.

This cultural myopia is no trivial matter. Indeed, in the mass geriatric society it could have deadly consequences. For unless we learn to accept both our frailties and our finitude, we are likely to find the burdens of caregiving intolerable. And unless we learn how to let loved ones die when the time comes, we will be tempted to kill—self-righteously, of course, in the guise of a false compassion. Sooner or later, when the medical gospel of healthy aging and the legal gospel of living wills are shown to have been false teachings, we may easily fall prey to the utilitarian gospel of euthanasia, whose prophets are patiently waiting in the wings for their time upon our cultural stage. Paradoxically, a dogmatic insistence that patients must be kept alive regardless of the depth of their disabilities—that severe dementia or unmanageable suffering deserves no consideration in deciding when to "let nature take its course"—may only make mercy killing appear to be the more compassionate remedy for the miseries of extended decline.

In the end, there is no "solution" to the problems of old age, at least no solution that any civilized society could tolerate. But there are better and worse ways to see our aging condition. The better way begins in thinking of ourselves less as wholly autonomous individuals than as members of families; in relinquishing our mistaken belief that medicine can miraculously liberate our loved ones or ourselves from debility and decline, and instead taking up our role as caregivers; and in abjuring the fantasy that we can control the manner and the hour of our dying, learning instead to accept death in its proper season as mortal beings replaced and renewed by the generations that follow.

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How Not to Become a Jew

Meir Soloveichik

FROM AUGUSTINE'S *Confessions* to C.S. Lewis's *Surprised by Joy*, the conversion memoir is a time-honored genre. Several Jewish versions have appeared in the last few years, including David Klinghoffer's *The Lord Will Gather Me In: My Journey to Jewish Orthodoxy* and Stephen Dubner's *Turbulent Souls: A Catholic Son's Return to His Jewish Family*.* But perhaps unique among recent entries in this category is *Girl Meets God*, by Lauren Winner, a 2002 book that describes not one conversion story but two.

Born in the American South, Winner, now in her late twenties, is the daughter of a Jewish father and a Gentile mother. Raised by her parents as a Reform Jew, she was, for most of her youth, obsessed with finding something more authentic. "I became convinced," she writes, "that the heart of Judaism, the most essentially Jewish thing, was a set of texts, and a particular, rabbinic way of reading them—a canon and a hermeneutic, if you like. And I became convinced that the people who were reading those texts, and reading them the right way, were Orthodox Jews."

Yet Winner was all too aware that, in the eyes of Orthodox Judaism, only a person born to a Jewish mother is considered a Jew by birth. Therefore, if she wished to become part of the Orthodox community, the only option open to her was conversion. Upon graduating from high school, she entered Columbia University in New York—not, she writes, "because it had a pretty campus or a good lacrosse team or a favorable male-to-female ratio, but because it had hundreds of Orthodox Jews"—and embraced a traditionalist way of life.

> I began attending Orthodox services every day; rose at 6:00 A.M. to study a treatise on . . . the Sabbath laws; worked part-time; was elected the Religious Life Coordinator of Columbia's Jewish Student Union; took up the ritual washing of hands Jews practice first thing every morning . . . virtuously visited the sick at a nearby hospital on Saturday afternoons; and began working with a rabbi to convert.

Soon she had achieved her goal.

Yet even as she devotedly practiced her new faith, Winner's academic interests and extracurricular pursuits were leading her in a different direction. She took courses in the New Testament and studied the religious history of the American South. In her spare time she frequented the Cloisters, a museum of medieval, mostly Christian, art, spending hours studying its tapestries and gazing at its collection of icons. And then, one night, she had a vivid dream in which she was in danger and was rescued by a male savior-like figure. "I knew,"

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* For a discussion of these two books, see "The Seekers" by Jon D. Levenson (COMMENTARY, June 1999).

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she writes, "as soon as I woke up, that the dream had come from God and it was about the reality of Jesus."

There followed a period of travail as Winner attempted to persuade herself that she was meant to be a Jew: "I had committed my life to Judaism. I was happily smitten with my Orthodox boyfriend. My day-to-day life in New York was all about Judaism; there was no room for Jesus there." But, although for most of her college years she persisted in her Jewish religious observance, eventually "my Judaism broke," and she turned away.

Finally baptized as a Christian, Winner returned to Columbia for graduate school. Today, she leads the life of a faithful Christian (and has recently published a book extolling pre-marital chastity and married sex).

Over the course of history, many Jews have ultimately embraced Christianity—some forcibly, some in order to advance in non-Jewish society, some out of wholehearted belief. But Winner is different: even as she affirms her new religion, she has continued to advert to her experience as a Jew. According to the book jacket of *Girl Meets God*, her purpose in so doing is "to reconcile both sides of her religious identity." In a short second book, *Mudhouse Sabbath* (2004), aimed explicitly at a Christian audience, Winner appeals to lessons she says she has learned from Judaism in the hope of enhancing the religious lives of her fellow Christians.

It is no doubt partly for this reason that many traditional Christians have reacted with jubilation to Winner's story, seeing in her an echo of the fathers of their faith. Like Paul, who was raised a "Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee," Winner regards rabbinic Judaism as a stepping stone to the higher truth of Christianity. As such, wrote the reviewer of *Girl Meets God* in *Christianity Today*, "Winner's story is invaluable to Christians who tend to forget that Jesus Christ was born a Jew, lived a Jew, and died a Jew." But the real value of Winner's book in the eyes of this reviewer might actually lie elsewhere, namely, in its effect on Jews who chanced upon it. For such Jewish readers, "it might cause further unease—leading to faith in the messiah who came once and will come again."

A traditionalist Jew who reads Winner's story will certainly experience unease, but for a different reason. In my own case, *Girl Meets God* spurred me to ponder not how Jews ought to think about Jesus but rather how they ought to think about Lauren Winner. What, from the perspective of Jewish religious law, is the status of someone like her today? Does conversion to Christianity undo a prior embrace of the Jewish faith? Does it make Winner a Gentile? To ask these questions is to consider, in turn, the similarities and the differences between conversion to Judaism and conversion to Christianity, and what these may tell us about the Jewish and Christian faiths.

Let us begin with the similarities. In both Judaism and Christianity, the conversion ceremony centers on the purifying power of water. In the Jewish case, the culmination of the conversion process (in Hebrew, *geirut*) takes place at a *mikveh*, a ritual bath created from a base of pure rainwater; only after a full-body immersion in the *mikveh* is a candidate for conversion considered Jewish. A male convert to Judaism must also be circumcised prior to his conversion—a requirement that, as we shall see, was a source of controversy among early Christians.

In like manner, according to the tenets of Christianity, one becomes a member of the church through the ritual of baptism (from the Greek *baptizein*, which means to "plunge" or "immerse"). The catechism of the Roman Catholic Church informs us that baptism is referred to as "the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit, for it signifies and actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no one can enter the kingdom of God." While baptism is most often performed by pouring water over the candidate's head, the "most expressive way" to perform it, according to the catechism, is "by triple immersion" of the whole body.

A second similarity: in both conversion rituals, the convert, prior to immersion, expresses his desire to live according to the tenets of his new religion, and openly accepts its dogma. The Christian convert must embrace Jesus as his savior. A convert to Judaism is often asked to affirm thirteen principles of faith, codified by Maimonides in the 12th century, each of which begins: *Ani ma'amin be-emunah shleimah*, "I believe with perfect faith." In her brief discussion of this litany—which proceeds from belief in the existence, eternal nature, omniscience, and omnipotence of God through the divine authorship of the Torah and confidence in the future redemption of the world by a messiah descended from David—Winner puts the point well:

> People often say that Christianity is a religion of belief, whereas Judaism is a religion of action. . . . Judaism does care, passionately, about

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> what you do, about what you eat and when you work and how you spend your money and whether or not you gossip and what fabric you use to make your clothes. But Judaism is also a religion of belief. Jews care, passionately, about belief. *Ani ma'amin be-emunah shleimah.*

At her own conversion, Winner reports, the rabbi asked: "'So Lauren, have you read the *ani ma'amin*?' I nodded. 'And do you believe it all?' 'Yes,' I said. 'I believe it all.'" Lauren Winner the Gentile then immersed herself in the *mikveh* and emerged a Jew.

Both Jewish and Christian conversions, then, stress purification and cleansing through immersion; in both, the convert proclaims allegiance to his new faith, his acceptance of its dogma, and his determination to live his life according to its laws. There is, however, a striking difference between the two ceremonies, and it involves not how the conversion is performed, but who is present at it.

"A [Jewish] conversion requires a *beit din*, a court of three rabbis." Winner notes the fact, but evidently does not regard it as particularly significant. But it is more than significant; it is essential. "If one immersed privately," Maimonides informs us in his definitive code of law, "and converted with no witnesses, or even in front of two witnesses [but without a court of three], he is not a valid convert." In Christianity, by contrast, baptism can be performed in private, as a matter strictly between a convert and his priest. In fact, in the absence of a priest, the catechism instructs that "anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize, by using the Trinitarian baptismal formula."

This tells us something crucial. Unlike the case in Christianity, conversion to Judaism is as much a public, legal proceeding as a sacramental one. Hence the requirement of a *beit din*, a court of law, whose presence at a religious ceremony would otherwise be distinctly odd. And the proceeding is legal in a special sense: in Judaism, conversion is an event at once spiritual and civil—or, indeed, political. To convert to Judaism is to take on not only a new faith but also a new nationality.

In Christianity, which in this respect as in others defined itself over against Judaism, nationality is irrelevant. "There is no difference between Jew and Greek," writes the apostle Paul, for "all are one in Christ Jesus." From the Church's very beginning, baptism was therefore performed irrespective of nationality: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Conversion to Judaism is otherwise, which is again why a court is needed in order to declare it valid.

"Let us ask ourselves," writes the talmudic scholar Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, pondering this political aspect of *geirut*, "what would happen if a potential [convert] were to declare himself ready to accept every one of the 613 commandments [of Judaism], committing himself to rigorous observance . . . , but refused to accept any sort of attachment to the nation, even the most minimal degree of allegiance." The answer is "crystal clear": having refused to take upon himself an essential aspect of Jewishness, he is not a Jew.

For Jews, the paradigmatic convert is the biblical Ruth, who sought not only a new relationship with God but also a new nationality. "My people will be your people," she tells her mother-in-law Naomi, adding only then the phrase, "and your God will be my God." Ruth's politico-spiritual conversion, depicted at the very end of the Hebrew Bible, only confirms what any astute reader will have noticed from the very beginning: God's religious covenant with the Jewish people has always been intimately linked with Jewish nationhood. ("And the Lord said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation, and will bless thee, and make thy name great.")

And here, as I have already hinted, we touch on an ancient point of contention between Judaism and Christianity. It can be put in the form of a question, or series of questions. Why, in Judaism, *must* the political be bound up with the religious? Why cannot one observe the commandments of the Torah without associating oneself with a particular people? Why did God elect a nation, rather than a universal movement?

THE HEBREW BIBLE, wrote the late Daniel Elazar, "is an eminently political book, in the classical sense":

> By virtue of its unique concern for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, [the Bible] could not help being concerned with the immediate development of the holy commonwealth that was to lead to the establishment of that ultimate kingdom. Consequently, a great part of the Bible . . . is given over to discussion of political matters, with special reference to the structure and purposes of *adat bnai yisrael*—the congregation of Israelites, the formal name of the Jewish people as a body politic.

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By choosing a *nation* through which to communicate His purposes for mankind, the God of the Jews stressed that man is a resident as much of this world as of the next, that not only the spiritual but also the political is a noble arena of human endeavor, and that man must work on this earth not only for the salvation of his soul but for the betterment of all. More than that, the election of Israel meant also that man, in Rabbi Lichtenstein's words, is a child not only of eternity but also of history.

The story of the Jewish people begins with an individual, Abraham, who with his wife Sarah gives birth to a great nation. "For a single one I chose," God says through the prophet Isaiah, "and I blessed him and multiplied him." God, we are told in Genesis, fell in love with the man Abraham, and for a reason that the Almighty makes explicit: "for I know him, that he will command his children and household after him, and they will keep the ways of the Lord, to perform righteousness and justice." It is precisely Abraham's love of justice and righteousness—those quintessentially political virtues—that God picks out for praise, and wishes to see perpetuated. In choosing a polity as a role model to other polities, God teaches the nations of the world that they, too, in their respective ways, can emulate Abraham and his children, and work within history to perpetuate justice and righteousness.

Daniel Elazar usefully contrasts this understanding with the view of Christian scripture, in which God's covenant with the Jews is universalized and national identity is dissipated. For the early Christians, Elazar writes, "matters of individual salvation, in a world where the second coming was expected momentarily, desacralized the prosaic details of political life and thus drastically reduced their importance. At most, political life was a transient necessary evil."

This seems to me somewhat overstated, at least if by political life one means life in community. Although baptism is the "sacrament of faith," the catechism states clearly that "faith needs the community of believers," adding that it is "only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe." Echoing this, Lauren Winner writes that the concept of the collective is as crucial to the Christian faith as it is to the Jewish one. But she also manages to put her finger on a pertinent distinction:

> Judaism speaks straightforwardly about community. "When the community is suffering, one may not say, 'I will go to my house, eat and drink, and I will be fine,'" the Talmud tells us. "Do not separate from the community," Rabbi Hillel says elsewhere. Christianity reaches for metaphor. The Church, the community of the faithful, is the very Body of God.

Just so. Although Christians believe themselves bound by baptism into a communion, this communion is other-worldly in nature. That is why a Christian, in Augustine's words, lives his bodily life here on earth "like a pilgrim in a foreign land." To be baptized is to become not a member of a nation but a citizen of the city of God, a spiritual kingdom that is not of this world.

STILL, IF the Jewish people are a nation, they are a nation like no other, and *geirut* is a citizenship ceremony like no other. One becomes a citizen of a nation, after all, by living in or emigrating to its homeland. The Jews certainly have a homeland—a small piece of the world that is the locus of their national aspirations and for which Ruth, the archetypal convert, left the land of her fathers. And yet one need not live in the promised land, or emigrate there, in order to join the Jewish nation. Lauren Winner joined the Jewish nation on the soil of the United States, and the Jews have collected converts in every land of their exile.

In short, while the Jewish people are a nation, their nationhood is not dependent on the land. Israel, according to Jewish tradition, came into being at Sinai, *before* entering the Holy Land. As the religious philosopher Michael Wyschogrod observes, this is most unusual: "Nowhere else in the memory of peoples is *entry* into the land remembered. A people is born out of a soil which is its mother. The people does not pre-date the land."

And that is not the only unusual feature. After the Jews entered the promised land, their nationhood did not depend on remaining in it. And after they were exiled from the land with the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., their nationhood remained intact for millennia, enabling a Jew born in 19th-century Morocco to consider himself a member of the same nation as a Jew born in 19th-century Poland.

What, then, binds the Jewish people together, connecting and sustaining them during centuries of exile and persecution?

Franz Rosenzweig, perhaps the most important Jewish theologian of the 20th century, gave an answer:

> There is only one community in which such a linked sequence of everlasting life goes from grandfather to grandson, only one which cannot utter the "we" of its unity without hearing deep within a voice that adds: "are eternal." It

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must be a blood community, because only blood gives warrant to the hope for a future.

A blood community: a Jew is not only the coreligionist, or the fellow citizen, of all other Jews, he is their sibling. The nation that God chose is a physical family, and Jews are joined first and foremost by their common descent from Abraham and Sarah. The election of Abraham was a carnal election, and the resultant bonds of blood link Jews eternally, demanding that they do everything in their power to perpetuate their family.

In this respect, too, Christianity is thoroughly different, for, as Stanley Hauerwas has noted, "family identity is not at the core of our identity as Christians." No one is born a Christian; two married members of the Church must baptize, and thereby convert, their children in order for them to become fellow members of their parents' faith. Hauerwas puts it provocatively: "the Church grows through the conversion of strangers, who often turn out to be our biological children."

It is precisely because Jewishness is familial that anyone born a Jew can never undo his Jewishness, no matter his beliefs. A Christian who does not believe in Christian dogma is no longer considered a Christian; but a Jewish apostate remains a Jew, and his return to the faith of his fathers is eagerly awaited by his brothers. A Jew is a member of the Jewish nation first and foremost because he is family, and family ties are unseverable.

To illustrate this point, let us take someone who has lived Lauren Winner's life in reverse. This is the writer Stephen Dubner, whose Jewish parents converted to Catholicism but who later returned on his own to the Jewish faith. In his memoir *Turbulent Souls*, Dubner describes a conversation he had, while still a Catholic, with a Jew by the name of Irving:

> "You've never been back [to Brooklyn]?" Irving asked. "No." "Not even to visit your bubbe?" "What's a bubbe?" Irving blinked and scratched the top of his head. . . . "Aren't you Jewish?" he asked. No, I explained, I wasn't Jewish, but my parents had been, before they became Catholic. Irving looked at me as one might look at a dog that had suddenly stood up and begun to tap-dance. "Anyway, once a Jew, always a Jew," he said after a moment, chuckling, and I nodded, as if I understood. . . . [But] what does this mean? How could a religion be transmitted through the blood? By what right, by what bizarre law, had these rabbis considered me one of theirs?

By what right? By right of the most fundamental notion known to man: that of familial bonds. Brother and sisters may squabble, they may fight, they may even betray and abandon; but they cannot break those ties.

BUT IF the Jews are a nation formed by familial ties, and by blood, how is conversion possible? It is easy to understand how one can adopt a new set of beliefs, or how one can become a citizen of a formerly foreign nation. How do you join a family?

The answer given by Judaism is that you can. If every Jew is indeed a member of Abraham's family, then, in some way that we cannot quite fully comprehend, a convert is bound into that same physical family. Just like a born Jew, a convert is not only a coreligionist, not only a fellow citizen, but also a new brother or sister. In reciting Jewish liturgy, the convert joins all other Jews in referring to the Almighty as "the God of my fathers"; he means it, and he is meant to mean it, in more than a metaphorical sense.

Familial bonds are the bonds that cannot be severed, but conversion is the exception that proves the rule. A convert, the Talmud informs us, "is akin to a newborn babe." The rabbis chose their words deliberately; upon emerging from the *mikveh*, the convert is no longer the child of his Gentile mother and father but is one just born to a Jewish father and mother—born, that is, to Abraham and Sarah.

In her memoir, Winner asserts that conversion in some way affects the convert *physically*:

> Somehow the *mikveh* effected a blood transfusion. The rabbis teach that every Jew, past and present, witnessed the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai. Converts, they say, witnessed it, too, but then our *neshamot*, our souls, accidentally got born into non-Jewish bodies. Stepping out of the *mikveh*, that all changed. My body had become right. My *neshamah* could rest comfortably. I was a Jew.

I would not put it this way; conversion does not transform the composition of one's blood, or one's DNA or racial identity. Indeed, the fact that Judaism allows conversion is the ultimate indication that Jewishness is itself not a racial identity. But Winner is not far off in arguing that conversion in some way creates a blood-tie between the Jewish people and the convert. Unlike baptism, conversion to Judaism is not about the salvation of one's soul and is not needed to wash away the curse of original sin. What conversion accomplishes is that it allows the Gentile to cleave unto the Jewish people as Ruth cleaved

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unto Naomi, miraculously to become part of the corporate body, and the physical family, of Israel.

The familial nature of conversion is also the reason for the insistence on circumcision as the first step in the process for men. Christianity famously debated, and ultimately rejected, its necessity:

> Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted [Gentiles] by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to [Jews]. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we [Jews] nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

When God's covenant is held to be universal, and religious continuity is achieved through mission rather than through family, circumcision is unimportant. For circumcision, referred to in Hebrew as a *brit*, or covenant, is a familial symbol: in particular, a symbol of the covenantal obligation to perpetuate the Abrahamic line. For a male convert to undergo circumcision symbolizes his pledge to direct his attention not only to his own spirituality but also to Jewish continuity. He is now a member of a family, and must undertake the responsibilities thereof.

Why then is there no parallel ritual for females, and why does immersion suffice? For the same reason: Judaism is founded on familial bonds, but only men need covenantal encouragement in strengthening and furthering those bonds. Women serve as the foundation of the Jewish family by instinct, in that they are inclined to bear and nurture children. Rabbinic Judaism recognizes this in its insistence on the matrilineal principle: only one whose mother is Jewish is considered a member of the Jewish family by birth.

We are now able to return to the question with which we began. Is someone like Lauren Winner still a Jew? Or has she undone her conversion by her subsequent apostasy? The answer is quite clear. Lauren Winner, having been born a Gentile, became a Jew and remains a Jew, no different from any born Jew who has forsaken Judaism. "Even if [a convert] has returned to idol worship," Maimonides writes, "he is considered a *yisrael meshumad*, a Jewish apostate." Winner's abandonment of the Jewish faith, her betrayal, does not affect her status as a member of the Jewish people.

This is a painful statement to have to make, for more than the obvious reasons. Thinking about it, I am reminded of a talmudic passage whose bluntness, in our politically correct times, is rather jarring. Converts, the Talmud says, "are as painful to Israel as a scab."

Most medieval Jewish commentators interpret this passage to mean that, precisely because conversion is irreversible, converts pose a terrible risk: the risk that they will lapse in their dedication to Jewish law or, worse, become actual enemies of the Jewish family. But one commentator, auspiciously bearing the name of Rabbi Abraham the Convert, retorted that this view is mistaken, and that the Talmud really means to criticize not converts but born Jews. In Rabbi Abraham's reading, converts, because of their demonstrated willingness to sacrifice so much, and to sever all previous familial ties, in order to join the Jewish people, constitute a living rebuke to those who, thanks to an accident of birth, take their Jewishness for granted.

Both interpretations are to some extent valid. There are Gentiles who, in their love for Judaism and the Jewish people, put to shame many who have been Jews for their entire lives. It is because such Gentiles exist that Judaism has always opened itself to outsiders. Yet by this openness Judaism also exposes itself to the danger that, once having forged themselves into members of the Jewish family, converts will betray their newfound brothers and sisters, abandon their covenantal commitments, and join the ranks of those born Jews who have lost all interest in their heritage.

In this sense, too, to ponder the concept of conversion is to delve into the larger question of what exactly it means to be, and to serve as, a member of the Jewish people.

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Are Newspapers Doomed?

Joseph Epstein

"CLEARLY," SAID Adam to Eve as they departed the Garden of Eden, "we're living in an age of transition." A joke, of course—but also not quite a joke, because when has the history of the world been anything other than one damned transition after another? Yet sometimes, in certain realms, transitions seem to stand out with utter distinctiveness, and this seems to be the case with the fortune of printed newspapers at the present moment. As a medium and as an institution, the newspaper is going through an age of transition *in excelsis*, and nobody can confidently say how it will end or what will come next.

To begin with familiar facts, statistics on readership have been pointing downward, significantly downward, for some time now. Four-fifths of Americans once read newspapers; today, apparently fewer than half do. Among adults, in the decade 1990-2000, daily readership fell from 52.6 percent to 37.5 percent. Among the young, things are much worse: in one study, only 19 percent of those between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four reported consulting a daily paper, and only 9 percent trusted the information purveyed there; a mere 8 percent found newspapers helpful, while 4 percent thought them entertaining.

From 1999 to 2004, according to the Newspaper Association of America, general circulation dropped by another 1.3 million. Reflecting both that fact and the ferocious competition for classified ads from free online bulletin boards like craigslist.org, advertising revenue has been stagnant at best, while printing and productions costs have gone remorselessly upward. As a result, the New York Times Company has cut some 700 jobs from its various papers. The *Baltimore Sun*, owned by the *Chicago Tribune*, is closing down its five international bureaus. Second papers in many cities have locked their doors.

This bleeding phenomenon is not restricted to the United States, and no bets should be placed on the likely success of steps taken by papers to stanch the flow. The *Wall Street Journal*, in an effort to save money on production costs, is trimming the width of its pages, from 15 to 12 inches. In England, the once venerable *Guardian*, in a mad scramble to retain its older readers and find younger ones, has radically redesigned itself by becoming smaller. London's *Independent* has gone tabloid, and so has the once revered *Times*, its publisher preferring the euphemism "compact."

FOR THOSE of us who grew up with newspapers in our daily regimen, sometimes with not one but two newspapers in our homes, it is all a bit difficult to take in. As early as 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville noted that even frontier families in upper Michigan had a weekly paper delivered. A.J.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN *contributed "Forgetting Edmund Wilson" to last month's* COMMENTARY. *His new book,* Friendship, An Exposé, *will be published by Houghton Mifflin in July.*

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Liebling, the *New Yorker*'s writer on the press, used to say that he judged any new city he visited by the taste of its water and the quality of its newspapers.

The paper to which you subscribed, or that your father brought home from work, told a good deal about your family: its social class, its level of education, its politics. Among the five major dailies in the Chicago of my early boyhood, my father preferred the *Daily News*, an afternoon paper reputed to have excellent foreign correspondents. Democratic in its general political affiliation, though not aggressively so, the *Daily News* was considered the intelligent Chicagoan's paper.

My father certainly took it seriously. I remember asking him in 1952, as a boy of fifteen, about whom he intended to vote for in the presidential election between Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. "I'm not sure," he said. "I think I'll wait to see which way Lippmann is going."

The degree of respect then accorded the syndicated columnist Walter Lippmann is hard to imagine in our own time. In good part, his cachet derived from his readers' belief not only in his intelligence but in his impartiality. Lippmann, it was thought, cared about what was best for the country; he wasn't already lined up; you couldn't be certain which way he would go.

Of the two candidates in 1952, Stevenson, the intellectually cultivated Democrat, was without a doubt the man Lippmann would have preferred to have lunch with. But in the end he went for Eisenhower—his reason being, as I recall, that the country needed a strong leader with a large majority behind him, a man who, among other things, could face down the obstreperous Red-baiting of Senator Joseph McCarthy. My father, a lifelong Democrat, followed Lippmann and crossed over to vote for Eisenhower.

My father took his paper seriously in another way, too. He read it after dinner and ingested it, like that dinner, slowly, treating it as a kind of second dessert: something at once nutritive and entertaining. He was in no great hurry to finish.

Today, his son reads no Chicago newspaper whatsoever. A serial killer could be living in my apartment building, and I would be unaware of it until informed by my neighbors. As for the power of the press to shape and even change my mind, I am in the condition of George Santayana, who wrote to his sister in 1915 that he was too old to "be influenced by newspaper argument. When I read them I form perhaps a new opinion of the newspaper but seldom a new opinion on the subject discussed."

I do subscribe to the *New York Times*, which I read without a scintilla of glee. I feel I need it, chiefly to discover who in my cultural world has died, or been honored (probably unjustly), or has turned out some new piece of work that I ought to be aware of. I rarely give the daily *Times* more than a half-hour, if that. I begin with the obituaries. Next, I check the op-ed page, mostly to see if anyone has hit upon a novel way of denigrating President Bush; the answer is invariably no, though they seem never to tire of trying. I glimpse the letters to the editor in hopes of finding someone after my own heart. I almost never read the editorials, following the advice of the journalist Jack Germond who once compared the writing of a newspaper editorial to wetting oneself in a dark-blue serge suit: "It gives you a nice warm feeling, but nobody notices."

The arts section, which in the *Times* is increasingly less about the arts and more about television, rock 'n' roll, and celebrity, does not detain me long. Sports is another matter, for I do have the sports disease in a chronic and soon to be terminal stage; I run my eyes over these pages, turning in spring, summer, and fall to see who is pitching in that day's Cubs and White Sox games. And I always check the business section, where some of the better writing in the *Times* appears and where the reporting, because so much is at stake, tends to be more trustworthy.

Finally—quickly, very quickly—I run through the so-called hard news, taking in most of it at the headline level. I seem able to sleep perfectly soundly these days without knowing the names of the current presidents or prime ministers of Peru, India, Japan, and Poland. For the rest, the point of view that permeates the news coverage in the *Times* is by now so yawningly predictable that I spare myself the effort of absorbing the facts that seem to serve as so much tedious filler.

Am I typical in my casual disregard? I suspect so. Everyone agrees that print newspapers are in trouble today, and almost everyone agrees on the reasons. Foremost among them is the vast improvement in the technology of delivering information, which has combined in lethal ways with a serious change in the national temperament.

The technological change has to do with the increase in the number of television cable channels and the astonishing amount of news floating around in cyberspace. As Richard A. Posner has written, "The public's consumption of news and opinion used to be like sucking on a straw; now it's like being sprayed by a fire hose."

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The temperamental change has to do with the national attention span. The critic Walter Benjamin said, as long ago as the 1930's, that the chief emotion generated by reading the newspapers is impatience. His remark is all the more pertinent today, when the very definition of what constitutes important information is up for grabs. More and more, in a shift that cuts across age, social class, and even educational lines, important information means information that matters to *me*, now.

And this is where the two changes intersect. Not only are we acquiring our information from new places but we are taking it pretty much on our own terms. The magazine *Wired* recently defined the word "egocasting" as "the consumption of on-demand music, movies, television, and other media that cater to individual and not mass-market tastes." The news, too, is now getting to be on-demand.

Instead of beginning their day with coffee and the newspaper, there to read what editors have selected for their enlightenment, people, and young people in particular, wait for a free moment to go online. No longer need they wade through thickets of stories and features of no interest to them, and least of all need they do so on the websites of newspapers, where the owners are hoping to regain the readers lost to print. Instead, they go to more specialized purveyors of information, including instant-messaging providers, targeted news sites, blogs, and online "zines."

Much cogitation has been devoted to the question of young people's lack of interest in traditional news. According to one theory, which is by now an entrenched cliché, the young, having grown up with television and computers as their constant companions, are "visual-minded," and hence averse to print. Another theory holds that young people do not feel themselves implicated in the larger world; for them, news of that world isn't where the action is. A more flattering corollary of this is that grown-up journalism strikes the young as hopelessly out of date. All that solemn good-guy/bad-guy reporting, the taking seriously of *opéra-bouffe* characters like Jesse Jackson or Al Gore or Tom DeLay, the false complexity of "in-depth" television reporting à la *60 Minutes*—this, for them, is so much hot air. They prefer to watch Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* on the Comedy Central cable channel, where traditional news is mocked and pilloried as obvious nonsense.

Whatever the validity of this theorizing, it is also beside the point. For as the grim statistics confirm, the young are hardly alone in turning away from newspapers. Nor are they alone responsible for the dizzying growth of the so-called blogosphere, said to be increasing by 70,000 sites a day (according to the search portal technorati.com). In the first half of this year alone, the number of new blogs grew from 7.8 to 14.2 million. And if the numbers are dizzying, the sheer amount of information floating around is enough to give a person a serious case of Newsheimers.

Astonishing results are reported when news is passed from one blog to another: scores if not hundreds of thousands of hits, and, on sites that post readers' reactions, responses that can often be more impressive in research and reasoning than anything likely to turn up in print. Newspaper journalists themselves often get their stories from blogs, and bloggers have been extremely useful in verifying or refuting the erroneous reportage of mainstream journalists. The only place to get a reasonably straight account of news about Israel and the Palestinians, according to Stephanie Gutmann, author of *The Other War: Israelis, Palestinians, and the Struggle for Media Supremacy*, is in the blogosphere.

THE TROUBLE with blogs and Internet news sites, it has been said, is that they merely reinforce the reader's already established interests and views, thereby contributing to our much-lamented national polarization of opinion. A newspaper, by contrast, at least compels one to acknowledge the existence of other subjects and issues, and reading it can alert one to affecting or important matters that one would never encounter if left to one's own devices, and in particular to that primary device of our day, the computer. Whether or not that is so, the argument has already been won, and not by the papers.

Another argument appears to have been won, too, and again to the detriment of the papers. This is the argument over politics, which the newspapers brought upon themselves and which, in my view, they richly deserved to lose.

One could put together an impressive little anthology of utterances by famous Americans on the transcendent importance of the press as a guardian watchdog of the state. Perhaps the most emphatic was that of Thomas Jefferson, who held that freedom of the press, right up there with freedom of religion and freedom of the person under the rights of habeas corpus and trial by jury, was among "the principles [that] form the bright constellation which has gone before us, and guided our steps through

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an age of revolution and reformation." Even today, not many people would disagree with this in theory; but like the character in a Tom Stoppard play, many would add: "I'm with you on the free press. It's the damned newspapers I can't stand."

The self-proclaimed goal of newsmen used to be to report, in a clear and factual way, on the important events of the day, on subjects of greater or lesser parochialism. It is no longer so. Here is Dan Rather, quoting with approval someone he does not name who defines news as "what somebody doesn't want you to know. All the rest is advertising."

"What somebody doesn't want you to know"—it would be hard to come up with a more concise definition of the target of the "investigative journalism" that has been the pride of the nation's newspapers for the past three decades. Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, Seymour Hersh, and many others have built their reputations on telling us things that Presidents and Senators and generals and CEO's have not wanted us to know.

Besides making for a strictly adversarial relationship between government and the press, there is no denying that investigative journalism, whatever (very mixed) accomplishments it can claim to its credit, has put in place among us a tone and temper of agitation and paranoia. Every day, we are asked to regard the people we elect to office as, essentially, our enemies—thieves, thugs, and megalomaniacs whose vicious secret deeds it is the chief function of the press to uncover and whose persons to bring down in a glare of publicity.

All this might have been to the good if what the journalists discovered were invariably true—and if the nature and the implications of that truth were left for others to puzzle out. Frequently, neither has been the case.

Much of contemporary journalism functions through leaks—information passed to journalists by unidentified individuals telling those things that someone supposedly doesn't want us to know. Since these sources cannot be checked or cross-examined, readers are in no position to assess the leakers' motives for leaking, let alone the agenda of the journalists who rely on them. To state the obvious: a journalist fervently against the U.S. presence in Iraq is unlikely to pursue leaks providing evidence that the war has been going reasonably well.

Administrations have of course used leaks for their own purposes, and leaks have also become a time-tested method for playing out intramural government disputes. Thus, it is widely and no doubt correctly believed that forces at the CIA and in the State Department have leaked information to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to weaken positions taken by the White House they serve, thereby availing themselves of a mechanism of sabotage from within. But this, too, is not part of the truth we are likely to learn from investigative journalists, who not only purvey slanted information as if it were simply true but then take it upon themselves to try, judge, and condemn those they have designated as political enemies. So glaring has this problem become that the *Times*, beginning in June, felt compelled to introduce a new policy, designed, in the words of its ombudsman, to make "the use of anonymous sources the 'exception' rather than 'routine.'"

No wonder, then, that the prestige of mainstream journalism, which reached perhaps an all-time high in the early 1970's at the time of Watergate, has now badly slipped. According to most studies of the question, journalists tend more and more to be regarded by Americans as unaccountable kibitzers whose self-appointed job is to spread dissension, increase pressure on everyone, make trouble—and preach the gospel of present-day liberalism. Aiding this deserved fall in reputation has been a series of well-publicized scandals like the rise and fall of the reporter Jayson Blair at the *New York Times*.

The politicization of contemporary journalists surely has a lot to do with the fact that almost all of them today are university-trained. In *Newspaper Days*, H.L. Mencken recounts that in 1898, at the age of eighteen, he had a choice of going to college, there to be taught by German professors and on weekends to sit in a raccoon coat watching football games, or of getting a job on a newspaper, which would allow him to zip off to fires, whorehouse raids, executions, and other such festivities. As Mencken observes, it was no contest.

Most contemporary journalists, by contrast, attend schools of journalism or study the humanities and social sciences. Here the reigning politics are liberal, and along with their degrees, and their sense of enlightened virtue, they emerge with locked-in political views. According to Jim A. Kuypers in *Press Bias and Politics*, 76 percent of journalists who admit to having a politics describe themselves as liberal. The consequences are predictable: even as they employ their politics to tilt their stories, such journalists sincerely believe they are (a) merely telling the truth and (b) doing good in the world.

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Pre-university-educated journalists did not, I suspect, feel that the papers they worked for existed as vehicles through which to advance their own political ideas. Some among them might have hated corruption, or the standard lies told by politicians; from time to time they might even have felt a stab of idealism or sentimentality. But they subsisted chiefly on cynicism, heavy boozing, and an admiration for craft. They did not treat the news—and editors of that day would not have permitted them to treat the news—as a trampoline off which to bounce their own tendentious politics.

TO THE degree that papers like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times* have contributed to the political polarization of the country, they much deserve their fate of being taken less and less seriously by fewer and fewer people. One can say this even while acknowledging that the cure, in the form of on-demand news, can sometimes seem as bad as the disease, tending often only to confirm users, whether liberal or conservative or anything else, in the opinions they already hold. But at least the curious or the bored can, at a click, turn elsewhere on the Internet for variety or relief—which is more than can be said for newspaper readers.

Nor, in a dumbed-down world, do our papers of record offer an oasis of taste. There were always a large number of newspapers in America whose sole standard was scandal and entertainment. (The crossword puzzle first appeared in Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*.) But there were also some that were dedicated to bringing their readers up to a high or at least a middling mark. Among these were the *New York Times*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the *Washington Post*, the *Milwaukee Journal*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the now long defunct *New York Herald-Tribune*, and the *Chicago Daily News*.

These newspapers did not mind telling readers what they felt they ought to know, even at the risk of boring the pajamas off them. The *Times*, for instance, used to run the full text of important political speeches, which could sometimes fill two full pages of photograph-less type. But now that the college-educated are writing for the college-educated, neither party seems to care. And with circulation numbers dwindling and the strategy in place of whoring after the uninterested young, anything goes.

What used to be considered the serious press in America has become increasingly frivolous. The scandal-and-entertainment aspect more and more replaces what once used to be called "hard news." In this, the serious papers would seem to be imitating the one undisputed print success of recent decades, *USA Today*, whose guiding principle has been to make things brief, fast-paced, and entertaining. Or, more hopelessly still, they are imitating television talk shows or the Internet itself, often mindlessly copying some of their dopier and more destructive innovations.

The editor of the *London Independent* has talked of creating, in place of a newspaper, a "viewspaper," one that can be viewed like a television or a computer. The *Los Angeles Times* has made efforts to turn itself interactive, including by allowing website readers to change the paper's editorials to reflect their own views (only to give up on this initiative when readers posted pornography on the page). In his technology column for the *New York Times*, David Carr speaks of newspapers needing "a podcast moment," by which I take him to mean that the printed press must come up with a self-selecting format for presenting on-demand news akin to the way the iPod presents a listener's favorite programming exactly as and when he wants it.

In our multitasking nation, we already read during television commercials, talk on the cell-phone while driving, listen to music while working on the computer, and much else besides. Some in the press seem in their panic to think that the worst problem they face is that you cannot do other things while reading a newspaper except smoke, which in most places is outlawed anyway. Their problems go much deeper.

IN A speech given this past April to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the international publisher Rupert Murdoch catalogued the drastic diminution of readership for the traditional press and then went on to rally the troops by telling them that they must do better. Not different, but better: going deeper in their coverage, listening more intently to the desires of their readers, assimilating and where possible imitating the digital culture so popular among the young. A man immensely successful and usually well anchored in reality, Murdoch here sounded distressingly like a man without a plan.

Not that I have one of my own. Best to study history, it is said, because the present is too complicated and no one knows anything about the future. The time of transition we are currently going through, with the interest in traditional newspapers beginning to fade and news on the computer still a

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vast confusion, can be likened to a great city banishing horses from its streets before anyone has yet perfected the automobile.

Nevertheless, if I had to prophesy, my guess would be that newspapers will hobble along, getting ever more desperate and ever more vulgar. More of them will attempt the complicated mental acrobatic of further dumbing down while straining to keep up, relentlessly exerting themselves to sustain the mighty cataract of inessential information that threatens to drown us all. Those of us who grew up with newspapers will continue to read them, with ever less trust and interest, while younger readers, soon enough grown into middle age, will ignore them.

My own preference would be for a few serious newspapers to take the high road: to smarten up instead of dumbing down, to honor the principles of integrity and impartiality in their coverage, and to become institutions that even those who disagreed with them would have to respect for the reasoned cogency of their editorial positions. I imagine such papers directed by editors who could choose for me—as neither the Internet nor I on my own can do—the serious issues, questions, and problems of the day and, with the aid of intelligence born of concern, give each the emphasis it deserves.

In all likelihood a newspaper taking this route would go under; but at least it would do so in a cloud of glory, guns blazing. And at least its loss would be a genuine subtraction. About our newspapers as they now stand, little more can be said in their favor than that they do not require batteries to operate, you can swat flies with them, and they can still be used to wrap fish.

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Comrades

Joshua Muravchik

THE FIRST time I contributed to this magazine was as a junior partner to Penn Kemble, a friend and longtime political activist who died last October at the age of sixty-four. In 1972, Penn and I collaborated on an article chronicling Senator George McGovern's role in rewriting the Democratic party's presidential-nominating rules and his subsequent use of those rules to win the nomination for himself.

Penn had found an inside source, someone who had served on the staff of the so-called "McGovern Commission" and was willing to talk about its deliberations and share its files. These were replete with secret memos frankly discussing how the commission could foist racial and sexual quotas on the party without calling them quotas. (They were referred to jocularly as "non-quota quotas.") The whole thing amounted to a breathtaking conflict of interest that only a liberal avatar like McGovern could have gotten away with, which induced Penn to propose that the piece be titled "The Machiavellis of Reform."*

I am still not sure why Penn recruited me to help him. As an undergraduate, he had entertained the ambition of becoming a writer and had accumulated some experience, but I had no idea how to write anything. (Once, after looking at something I put down on paper, he explained to me that a sentence should convey a thought and then end.) For the COMMENTARY article, at any rate, we made an outline and divided the sections between us; he wrote his half, revised the half I had written, and then stitched the parts together.

When the piece was accepted and we received our fee, Penn said apologetically that he would like to keep a share of it for himself in order to cover some expenses. Since he was drawing a salary at the time and I was unemployed, he assumed that I was entitled to the whole check on the basis of the socialist principle—to each according to his need—that we both professed. I don't recall how much he asked to retain, perhaps a third, but even half would have been less than proportional to his contribution.

THAT MY first appearance in COMMENTARY came courtesy of Penn was but one of many ways in which I was his follower. I had first encountered him in 1963 at a meeting of the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL, pronounced "yipsel"), the youth section of the Socialist Party of America that had been founded in the early 20th century by Eugene Debs and was led for many decades by Norman Thomas. As is typical with radical groups of all kinds, this particular meeting was given over to factional rivalry. The antagonists

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* It appeared in the December 1972 COMMENTARY under a more demure title, "The New Politics and the Democrats."

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who paraded to the microphone diverged in their views, but they were alike in their scruffy appearance, offering a tableau much like the one immortalized by the late Marion Magid, an editor of COMMENTARY who, attending a radical gathering in the early 1960's with Norman Podhoretz, remarked that every person in the room was clearly a tragedy to some family or other.

But then someone took the floor who did not look as if he was anyone's tragedy, or indeed as if he belonged there at all. That was Penn. He was twenty-two, and he might have stepped out of a respectable college fraternity. Clean-shaven, without an ounce of fat on his short muscular frame or a hair out of place on his head, he appeared, in this room full of Jews and the occasional Irishman, like the stock image of a WASP. Neither his look nor his ethnicity scored him any points with the crowd at hand, as must have been evident to him, too. He began his remarks by saying that he had only recently arrived in New York from Colorado and was having trouble following the esoteric debate, which was richly marbled with Marxist jargon.

That his innocence was a pose became apparent soon enough. The ideological disquisition that followed bore all the earmarks of close training at the knee of Penn's own Marxist mentor, Alex Garber. A professor of sociology at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Garber played guru to a chapter of YPSL's made up mostly of his students. There were perhaps a hundred of them, a staggeringly high number for such a group. Garber himself had grown up as a member of the Olerites, an eponymous Communist splinter group whose ranks at its height may barely have reached double digits.

By the time Penn became one of his prize pupils, Garber had progressed from Communist schismatic to right-wing social democrat. Indeed, he and his acolytes—among them were my future wife Sally and several others who remain friends and allies to this day—took pride in being the most right-wing of socialists, having developed a peculiar combination of standard-issue opposition to the free market with fierce anti-Communism and cold-war hawkishness. Typical of this was their stance on fallout shelters, a hot issue in the late 50's and early 60's. Unlike other leftists, who shuddered that such measures would help make nuclear war thinkable, the Boulder YPSL's argued that they were a perfectly acceptable means of national defense but that their construction should not be allowed to profit any capitalist. Rather, the federal government should build a shelter for every citizen *and* hire the unemployed to do the construction.

SCHOOLED IN such gymnastics, Penn was hardly the hick he made himself out to be in his maiden speech to the New York "comrades," as we invariably referred to ourselves. Despite his out-of-place looks and anomalous genealogy, he was prepared to hold his own in dialectical skirmish, then and later. Nonetheless, in the early 1960's his was the losing side. In what proved a harbinger of the increasing radicalization of student activism throughout the decade, the left wing soon took command of YPSL, and the organization flew apart in an explosion of new factions, each more radical than the last. By 1965, most had found their way to more fertile fields in the emergent New Left. Ironically, they also thereby cleared a path for our rump of right-wingers to re-create the YPSL according to our own lights.

The moving force for this was a triumvirate comprising Paul Feldman, the editor of the Socialist paper *New America*; Tom Kahn, the head of the League for Industrial Democracy, an old socialist academic association; and Penn. Being in their late twenties, Paul and Tom played the role of senior advisers. Penn, then twenty-four, became the YPSL leader. I, at seventeen, was among the more active rank-and-file.

Penn and Paul seemed to be constant companions, although, politics aside, it was hard to see what they had in common. Paul was much the taller, pot-bellied and lacking Penn's musculature. Where Penn was extremely well turned out, Paul was awkward and covered in ash from the unfiltered Pall Malls that hung perpetually from the corner of his bottom lip. He had a stutter, and even after learning to master it he spoke in a self-consciously lowbrow New York diction that he used as a kind of shield, or as a medium for his sardonic humor. Once, during his college years, a Ferris wheel halted with his gondola swaying near the top of its arc. Paul yelled to his date: "Now put out or get out." Years later, visiting him at the beach, I was shown how he surf-cast a shiny lure with his new fishing pole. "Sometimes the fish try to catch it," he said. "But I'm too fast for 'em."

Penn and Paul were the leading white members of the East Harlem branch of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), of which I was a junior member. One rush-hour afternoon in 1964, a phalanx of our forces staged a sit-in on the Triboro Bridge while the rest of us patrolled the bridge's walkway distributing leaflets explaining our purpose. The point was to impede commuters on their way home from Manhattan and make them think about the plight of the poor blacks they were leav-

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ing behind in dirty tenements. To make sure they got the picture, we dumped piles of authentic ghetto garbage on the bridge. It took a while for the cops to reach us through the massive traffic jam created by our shenanigans, but luckily they did so before the steaming commuters caused bodily harm to our vanguard. As the law moved in to make arrests, our protesters, instead of going limp as was the norm in such non-violent acts of civil disobedience, linked arms and clung to each other with all their strength, forcing the officers to pry them apart before loading them into the paddy wagons.

Later, Penn told me that the cops had roughed them up on the way to the station house, an instance of police brutality that he considered amply provoked. He was, in any event, fearless at taking a punch. He lived in a slum building on the Lower East Side of Manhattan long before many other whites moved into the area and realtors rechristened it the "East Village." Once, he had intervened forcefully to protect a neighborhood woman from a beating by her boyfriend, and a brawl ensued. Penn got the short end of it when the boyfriend, joined by a buddy, pummeled him two against one.

Paul, too, was physically bold, and tended to become overly aggressive when drunk. On one occasion, after a few rounds in a bar with another comrade, he waxed obstreperous and the police were called. The look of the two of them, and their Jewish-sounding names, must have struck the would-be arresting officer as funny; laughing, he let them go with a warning.

TOM KAHN was rather more remote than Penn or Paul. He had been adopted in infancy by a mismatched couple who did not get along. His father had been a Communist and a minor official of the New York subway workers' union; his mother was a practicing Catholic. Since it was through a Catholic agency that Tom was adopted, his father had nominally converted from Judaism for the purpose. But Communism was his true faith, and his new affiliation meant no more to him than his old.

The reflex of trying to shut out his parents' quarrels must have contributed something to Tom's remoteness. So, too, did his homosexuality. Although everyone active in the movement was aware of it, he was never explicitly out of the closet. He took his sexual orientation as an affliction, a source of pain and embarrassment. In part, perhaps, because he was so unreconciled to his longings, he limited himself for a long time to brief encounters. But then he became involved with one of the YPSL's and was compelled to seek the counsel of a psychiatrist to explain his unfamiliar feelings. The diagnosis, he told me, was "you're in love."

Tom played a part of unsung importance in the civil-rights movement. As one of the few white students at Howard University, he had helped to develop the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, soon to be headed by Stokely Carmichael. He had also formed an early bond with Bayard Rustin, the key disciple of A. Philip Randolph and mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr. Together, Rustin, Tom, and Norman Hill, a black fellow socialist who helped lead CORE, had come up with the idea for the 1963 March on Washington, the landmark civil-rights demonstration at which King delivered his now famous "I have a dream" speech.

Before enrolling at Howard, Tom had spent a few years at Brooklyn College, which is where he first met Paul. There, the two of them became devotees of a former Trotskyist named Max Shachtman—a fact that today has taken on a life of its own. Tracing forward in lineage through me and a few other ex-YPSL's turned neoconservatives, this happenstance has fueled the accusation that neoconservatism itself, and through it the foreign policy of the Bush administration, are somehow rooted in "Trotskyism."

I am more inclined to laugh than to cry over this, but since the myth has traveled so far, let me briefly try once more, as I have done at greater length in the past, to set the record straight.* The alleged connective chain is broken at every link. The falsity of its more recent elements is readily ascertainable by anyone who cares for the truth—namely, that George Bush was never a neoconservative and that most neoconservatives were never YPSL's. The earlier connections are more obscure but no less false. Although Shachtman was one of the elder statesmen who occasionally made stirring speeches to us, no YPSL of my generation was a Shachtmanite. What is more, our mentors, Paul and Tom, had come under Shachtman's sway years after he himself had ceased to be a Trotskyite.

PAUL AND TOM provided the strongest ideological guidance, but Penn possessed a unique creative genius. Left to the likes of me, our activity would have consisted of adopting position papers on myriad issues and then casting a net for any of our peers who might agree with them. Penn understood that people are likely to be drawn to po-

* See "The Neoconservative Cabal," COMMENTARY, September 2003.

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litical movements more through activities than through abstractions. He was forever dreaming up action projects and creating organizations designed both to give our members something to do and to bring us into touch with other activists who might be recruited to our ranks.

One of his earliest creations, on which Paul collaborated, was Negotiation Now! Launched in 1967, when Penn was all of twenty-six, it had a notable impact on early debates over the Vietnam war. Calling for a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam and for unconditional talks with the Communists, it distinguished itself from other antiwar voices by explicitly criticizing the idea of an unconditional U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

A second Kemble creation of the late 1960's was Frontlash. The odd name was intended as a riposte to the "backlash" of blue-collar workers, many of them registered Democrats, who had voted for George Wallace in the presidential race of 1968. Bringing college students into cooperation with the labor movement, Frontlash worked in voter-registration drives aimed at boosting the regular Democratic vote. It proved so successful that the AFL-CIO eventually adopted it as its official arm for outreach to young people.

Later there were to be numerous other Kemble creations, many of them influential, leading the political commentator Ben Wattenberg to quip that YPSL's grand strategy was to "take over the world in a blizzard of letterheads." How Penn came up with these ideas I could never figure out. But when he did, he was relentless in making them happen, a bit like an artist who sees things that others do not and then will surmount any obstacle to bring his vision to life. I learned early that it was best to hold on to my hat and jump aboard.

Over the next several years, YPSL grew to perhaps as many as a thousand members. That was not much in a country the size of the U.S., but it was not as insignificant as it may sound. In student politics, the question is not how many members you have on paper but how many of them you can mobilize. This explains why the New Left, which started out on the extreme fringe of the American spectrum and grew ever more outré in its positions and activities, could nevertheless set the tone for a generation.

In the student world of that era, groups reflecting mainstream America held the allegiance of few. As a result, we YPSL's, although earnestly regarding ourselves not only as socialists but even as Marxists of a sort, and thus to the Left of 99 percent of Americans, spent the largest portion of our energies battling student groups even farther to our Left. Sometimes this allowed us to capture the ostensible middle ground.

Thus, we participated in a large umbrella organization, the United States Youth Council, of which first Penn and then I served as vice president. It included the Young Democrats and Young Republicans, the Catholic Youth Organization, the YMCA and YWCA, and dozens of other such venerable organizations whose names are familiar to everyone. But we discovered that YPSL was stronger than any of them: among our 1,000 members, we had more dedicated "cadres" than others could muster out of their tens of thousands.

In addition, we had more confidence in what we stood for. In contrast to us, the representatives of the more prosaic youth organizations, although they did not identify themselves with the New Left, generally lacked the élan to stand up to it or even to articulate ideas that bucked the radical tide. By means of this experience I learned a truth about politics that I have since seen validated in countless different guises. In resisting extremists, the problem with moderates is that they are moderates. This means they are temperamentally averse to matching the extremists blow for blow. Only rarely did we YPSL's encounter other youth groups ready to oppose the New Left, and they were all immoderate themselves: the followers of Sun Myung Moon; the Jewish Defense League; and the cult of Lyndon LaRouche during a brief centrist moment in its peregrination from ultra-Left to ultra-Right.*

So powerful was the pull of the New Left on our generation that opposition to it caused a schism within the larger socialist movement. Not that, after the battles of the early 1960's, many YPSL's themselves were drawn to the New Left; but the figurehead of the Socialist party, the writer Michael Harrington, found its allure irresistible. To be sure, he was critical of it, but his criticisms were mostly instrumental: he feared that the New Left's "antics" would alienate Americans and push them to the Right, whereas by joining the movement and bidding for leadership within it, he thought he could push it in a more responsible direction. Most of the rest of us, by contrast, were repelled by what the New Left stood for: a "revolution" that would remake America in the image of Mao's China or Castro's Cuba.

* I must record one exception to the general fecklessness of mainstream youth groups in that era. Just as I was moving out of the U.S. Youth Council, ceding my place to younger YPSL's, a group of uncharacteristically nervy Young Republicans became active in it. Although I met them only briefly, they seemed to get their starch from their leader, a wiry kid named Karl Rove.

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None of the one or two dozen other most respected leaders of the party shared Harrington's view, but he was the only celebrity in our ranks. This was thanks to his 1962 bestseller, *The Other America*, which was said to have inspired the Johnson administration's "War on Poverty." As a result, Harrington was the polestar for a fair slice of the party membership. But he could never win a majority, and after a few years he decided to break off and form his own organization.

As it happens, the proximate cause of the final split was the Democrats' 1972 nomination of George McGovern, who had vowed to go to Hanoi "on my knees" if that would secure the release of American POW's and thus enable a final and complete withdrawal from the Vietnam war. Harrington applauded McGovern's opposition to the war. He was also delighted that McGovern's candidacy had drawn the antiwar movement away from raucous demonstrations and into electoral politics, where it could be much more effective.

To our side in the party, however, McGovern seemed hopelessly soft on Communism. In addition, the AFL-CIO under George Meany had refused to endorse the Democratic nominee, an unwonted stance for the labor federation that was made all the more egregious by the fact that McGovern's Republican opponent was Richard Nixon. Since sticking close to the AFL-CIO (which we quite reasonably viewed as embodying the proletariat) was a supreme value to us YPSL's, we were happy to go along.

As for Harrington's dream of an increasingly respectable antiwar movement that, constituting a "new class," could come to dominate the Democratic party, to us this seemed nothing less than a nightmare, and we aimed to do what we could to prevent it from happening.

THUS DID the upheaval wrought by McGovernism thrust our little socialist band more squarely into mainstream politics. The 1972 article about McGovern that Penn and I published in COMMENTARY was a small marker of this transformation. Another was the formal split of the socialist movement, and the subsequent decision by our side to change the name from Socialist Party of America to Social Democrats USA. Dropping the two words "socialist" and "party" signified an overdue relinquishment of our self-concept as "radicals" and a dawning recognition that we were now centrists.

Our entry into mainstream politics in the early 1970's entailed a geographic change as well—specifically, a migration from New York to Washington. It had begun a little earlier with Tom, who had been commissioned to write speeches for Lane Kirkland, the second-ranking official (after Meany) of the AFL-CIO. Then Senator "Scoop" Jackson, discovering Tom's talents, recruited him for his own campaign for the 1972 Democratic nomination. When Tom's work for Jackson ended, Kirkland gave him a permanent position at the AFL-CIO as, in effect, the house intellectual.

Penn, too, moved to Washington, becoming the chief executive of another organization largely of his own invention, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM). With Jackson and Hubert Humphrey as its titular leaders, and with financial backing from organized labor, CDM, founded in the wake of Nixon's landslide reelection, became the factional center for the anti-McGovern Democrats. A year later, Penn hired me to come work for CDM, and once again I followed in his footsteps.

Paul was in some sense left behind. He had been well cut out for New York, where we had formed a kind of Marxist sect, living in a milieu of ideological scholasticism and cultivating offbeat ways of life, or at least their appearance. In Washington, we were merely a network, inhabiting the world of ordinary politics and government and conducting lives whose rhythms did not differ appreciably from those of our bourgeois neighbors.

Moreover, as our energies shifted into the mainstream and with the split of the Socialist party, the paper that Paul had edited, sometimes going unpaid for months, became unsustainable. Someone, probably Tom, helped him find a job with the newspaper of the steelworkers' union. This, however, was in Pittsburgh, away from the center of political action. Paul put his ideological talents to use in fending off an effort by the New Left to capture the union in the late 1970's, but on the whole his position must have seemed a far cry from the leadership role he had played among us just a few years earlier.

BOTH PAUL'S difficulties and our relative success were inadvertently presaged in a comment that his wife, Sandy, had made to me at a party long before. Looking across the room at Penn, she had had an epiphany. "Penn could make it in the real world," she said. And then, after a pause suggesting that one epiphany had led to another, she added: "So could you."

She was right about Penn. In the 30-odd years after migrating to Washington, he carved out a distinct place for himself in American politics, culminating in a stint as deputy director and then as act-

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ing director of the U.S. Information Agency under President Clinton. Through it all, he never ceased inventing new organizations, many of them important. Nor did he change his ideology. At the conclusion of the Clinton administration, instead of parlaying his eight years in office into new sources of remuneration, as is customary in Washington, he went back to the task of trying to sustain some kind of social-democratic network.

Others in our old socialist group made meaningful careers as well. Tom Kahn's stature at the AFL-CIO rose as Lane Kirkland succeeded Meany in the presidency of the federation. Tom became the chief of labor's foreign-policy programs, and in that capacity he orchestrated labor's support for Solidarity in Poland. Rachelle Horowitz, a comrade of Paul and Tom at Brooklyn College, became a leader of the Democratic National Committee. I found my niche writing essays and books. Arch Puddington, now at Freedom House, did much the same. Carl Gershman, who succeeded me as YPSL leader as I had succeeded Penn, became president of the National Endowment for Democracy. Linda Chavez became a noted columnist and TV commentator. Her husband, Chris Gersten, served in appointed office under both Presidents Bush. Max Green was President Reagan's liaison to the American Jewish community. John Earl Haynes distinguished himself as a historian of American Communism. David Jessup became the point man for the quite substantial efforts by organized labor under Kirkland to resist Communism in Central America. Marshall Wittmann became the spokesman for the Christian Coalition. Jim Wood, an Okie from the far wrong side of the tracks, became a top labor and political figure in Los Angeles before dying young. And there were many others.

All this would have surprised Sandy Feldman, but no more so than the identity of the one person of all of us who was to enter the "real world" and make it the biggest. In the early 1970's, leaving one of those meetings that were almost a nightly routine with us, I had accompanied Paul to pick up Sandy at Manhattan's Washington Irving High School, where she was representing the teachers' union for which she then worked. The meeting hadn't ended, so we sat in the back and watched as Sandy took the floor several times. "She's good at this," Paul whispered to me in pride.

His pride was tinged with wonder, since Sandy had never distinguished herself in the Marxist theoretics that we all took to be the highest form of political skill. Not one of us, including Sandy herself, could have imagined that in time she would rise to the presidency of the American Federation of Teachers, one of America's largest and mightiest labor unions.

IN RETROSPECT, it seems less surprising that many of us should have achieved a measure of professional success. Despite our sense of ourselves as misfits, we were, after all, a group of middle-class youngsters with plenty of advantages. What is more surprising, and of greater interest, is that our little band should have exercised an impact on the political developments of the past decades.

It was not the impact we thought we would have. Our formative experience in the civil-rights movement and the great confrontation with Jim Crow had predisposed us to assume an axiomatic need for "social change" in the United States. By contrast, many of us came to believe that more than changing America, the truly urgent task was defending it, and what it stood for. In that sense, we would with justice come to be known as neoconservatives.

The impetus of this evolution came from three forces, I believe. The first was the recognition that, however much capitalist America might fall short of our edenic socialist vision, Communism was infinitely farther from the mark and, to boot, posed a lethal threat. The second was the repulsion we experienced in our encounter with the New Left—which, seen up close, struck us youngsters as even more nihilistic, irrational, and narcissistic than it seemed to our elders.

The third followed from the first two. If one were to ask what was the best political system imaginable—Plato's question—then the answer for us (as for Plato) was socialism. But what about Cicero's question, namely, what is the best system *extant*? Measured by the abstract ideals we held—freedom, equality, opportunity—it was hard to deny that America came out on top. And even if you thought some other (usually West European) country surpassed America's achievements in those areas, it was one whose political system resembled America's in important respects and that survived thanks to America's protection.

Thus we came to deploy the political passion that had first brought us to socialism, and the ideological skills we had developed in the hothouse of young socialist activism, not to overhaul our country but to defend it and the principles it embodied.

A FEW years after Paul moved to Pittsburgh, and still in his early forties, he suffered a debilitating stroke that forced him into a nursing home where he lingered for many years before succumb-

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ing. Tom, meanwhile, contracted AIDS and died of it in 1992. He was fifty-one. He and I had not been close during his latter years, but I saw him near the end and was pleased to learn that he had a partner with whom he appeared at last to have found contented intimacy.

If Paul and Tom were felled by ailments for which they were at risk, Penn never appeared to be at risk at all. Just like the dapper twenty-two-year-old who seemed so out of place at that YPSL meeting in 1963, he led a life of exemplary self-discipline. I often watched him sip a glass of red wine at a meal as if it were a great indulgence, to be savored slowly. None of his muscle ever went to fat: he played handball at the Y regularly with guys literally half his age. But one day, in the summer of 2004, as he prepared to go out for the evening, he had a seizure, and a tumor was discovered in his brain. It was removed; he resumed working and playing handball. But it returned, and it took him last October.

During the final weeks, as his condition deteriorated, he seemed determined to hold on for a final socialist meeting. It was one that he himself had conceived but no longer had the strength to execute. (Carl Gershman, in a last, fine act of friendship, assumed the burden of organizing it.) The meeting was billed as a tribute to the late philosopher Sidney Hook, but Penn had had an ulterior purpose. He intended it as a device for revivifying the Social Democrats. For most of the rest of us, it had an ulterior purpose as well—paying tribute to Penn.

As we counted off the days, hoping he would live to see it, we were buffeted by another strange twist of fate when Sandy Feldman, who had stepped down from the presidency of the teachers' union for reasons of health, died of cancer. She was sixty-five to Penn's sixty-four.

Penn, Paul, Tom, and Sandy remained socialists, or social democrats, to the end. I and others more exactly my age (Carl, Linda Chavez, Arch Puddington, John Haynes, Max Green) abandoned that faith years ago, without losing our esteem for the older group. Their lives were brief, and they entirely failed at moving America even a little toward socialism. But in the "real world," their works were consequential nevertheless.

For them, the rather nebulous concept of "socialism" functioned in truth as a kind of code word or incantation meant to connote everything that is decent and humane. Today, all such things, as well as America itself, are under fresh attack by the darkest foes. I dearly hope that something of the legacy of my old mentors and comrades will make itself felt once again in the defense.

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OBSERVATIONS

Sadness, Gladness—and Serotonin

Algis Valiunas

THESE DAYS, psychiatrists tend to treat mental illness as principally an affliction not of the mind but of the brain—a condition, that is, marked by a deficiency or excess of certain neurochemicals, which medication can restore to healthy levels. The pill has replaced the couch as the therapeutic instrument of first resort.

Ever since the usefulness of some of the most important psychoactive drugs was discovered by serendipity—doctors could see that the drugs worked without knowing why—clinical practice has remained several large steps ahead of neurobiological theory. But the theory is catching up, and its influence on the culture at large will surely be as momentous as Freudian theory was during the last century. Two recent books, by distinguished professors of psychiatry writing for a lay audience, introduce the reader to the latest developments in the field. They also provoke far-reaching questions about the new world into which the innovations are taking us.

ALGIS VALIUNAS, *who writes on culture and politics, contributed "Who Needs Ayn Rand?" to the September 2005* COMMENTARY.

In *Against Depression*,* Peter D. Kramer, a clinical professor at Brown University, has written a kind of sequel to his pathbreaking *Listening to Prozac* of twelve years ago. The new book is in essence an assault on the idea of mental illness as a form of "heroic melancholy." That idea, Kramer writes, has deep roots in the Western tradition. From Aristotle through Shakespeare's Hamlet to the Romantic poets to Tolstoy's Anna Karenina and well into our own time, we have been fixated by an image of nobility and genius that is inextricable from agonizing "inner struggle." According to that image,

> [t]he rumination of the depressive, however solipsistic, is deemed admirable. And this value applies even in cases when the interior examination fails due to a lack of moral courage. No matter that the protagonist remains callow and self-deluding. Melancholic sensitivity is noble by definition.

Kramer concedes that what melancholic writers have had to say about politics or the human condition—that "life is absurd, chaotic, and brief," that "bourgeois contentment can be superficial," that "the moral quest ennobles us"—might very well be true. But depression, he insists, is something quite different from alienation, anomie, or spiritual despair, and to use it as an all-purpose metaphor does a disservice to the mentally ill.

As against the tradition of heroic melancholy, Kramer offers a counter-tradition, going back to Hippocrates, according to which depression is a *medical* illness, demanding medical treatment. Without denying the greatness of the melancholic writers and their battered heroes, he hopes that advances in psychiatry will bring about a cultural shift for the better, and even produce better writers. "If we could treat depression reliably," he declares, "we would have different artists, different subjects, different stories, different needs, different tastes"—in short, a healthier world.

CONSIDERED MEDICALLY, depression is a syndrome, or group of concurrent symptoms, that manifests itself in varying pathological forms.

* Viking, 353 pp., $25.95.

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There are nine fundamental symptoms; different patients may have different permutations of them, and the same patient may show different symptoms at different times. In Kramer's summary, the nine are: "depressed mood, problems experiencing pleasure, low energy, disrupted sleep, diminished or increased appetite, mental or physical agitation or slowing, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, difficulty concentrating, and suicidality."

For a diagnosis of major depression to be made, five of the nine symptoms must be present, including one of the first two over a span of at least two weeks, and they must be severe enough to cause distress or affect behavior. Certain conditions of intense suffering—normal bereavement, for instance—do not qualify as depression, even though the relevant symptoms may be present. Occasionally, a single, sufficiently awful symptom—especially suicidality—warrants immediate treatment as though the entire syndrome were present.*

There are also conditions—manic-depressive illness and schizoaffective disorder—in which depression alternates with mania, sometimes in prolonged cycles, sometimes in brief or rapid ones. Manic symptoms are high energy, little need for sleep, vast confidence, racing thoughts, cosmic certainty, and, at its worst, florid psychosis. Manic depression is discussed at length in *Exuberance*, by Kay Redfield Jamison,† the second of the two books I mentioned above; I shall return to it later on, only noting here that if depressives commit suicide at twenty times the rate of the normal population, manic depressives follow close behind at fifteen times the normal rate.

Ever since the first antidepressants were developed in the 1950's—these were the monoamine-oxidase inhibitors, or MAOI's—it has been known that the neurotransmitter serotonin, like another neurotransmitter, norepinephrine, profoundly affects mood. (Neurotransmitters assist in the movement of impulses across the synapses between nerve endings.) Although the pertinent molecular transactions in mental illness are far more complex than any simple model would indicate, researchers know for a certainty that depression is associated with low serotonin levels, well-being with high levels.

In 1990, Kramer wrote a series of columns in a psychiatric trade journal describing the extraordinary success he and other doctors were having with a new generation of drugs called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRI's, of which Prozac was the flagship brand. The SSRI's refined and focused the basic action of the MAOI's, without causing the side-effects that made MAOI's dangerous. It also soon became apparent that the clinical applications of SSRI's extended well beyond the treatment of depression.

SSRI's work effectively against panic attacks, eating disorders, attention-deficit disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and various other syndromes and individual symptoms. Indeed, in *Listening to Prozac*, Kramer suggested that SSRI's ought more accurately to be called thymoleptics, drugs that affect the emotions. Prozac itself, for example, is actually more effective against various psychological aches and pains, including shyness, social anxiety, and low self-esteem, than it is against the more virulent forms of major depression.

THANKS TO their multiform usefulness and good press, SSRI's became some of the most frequently prescribed drugs in America, and Kramer, through his medical columns and *Listening to Prozac*, became their trademark proponent. Now, in *Against Depression*, he presses for a campaign to eradicate depression altogether, just as medicine once eradicated smallpox.

Depression, Kramer states categorically, is an illness rooted in the physiology of the brain. Admittedly, its origins in any one individual are complex, involving the interplay of genetic predisposition, inborn temperament, and character. Some people are more liable to depression than others because they are unable to rebound from life's ordinary failures and disappointments, or perhaps from its most terrible tragedies. Low self-esteem, pessimism, dependency on others, and feelings of helplessness all incline one toward depression; neuroticism, in the limited sense of moodiness, actually predicts it.

Nevertheless, some generalizations hold. According to Kramer, the contribution made to the disease by one's genes, as opposed to environmental factors, runs between 35 and 40 percent; among those with persistent or frequently recurrent depression, the genetic contribution is over 50 percent. Moreover, whatever the exact origin of an individual's depression, or the exact nature of the interaction between genes and the environment, once the disease begins it "leads to a brittle state in which minor adversity becomes catastrophic. That adversity includes episodes of the disease itself." Finally, depression causes actual physical injury—demonstrable by computer-aided mapping of the brain—which then contributes to further depression. The longer the depression lasts, the worse the brain damage. This means that any delay in treatment only makes it worse. "Every day counts."

Damage can occur not only at the individual level but in the form of a public-health crisis. "Depression is the most devastating disease known to humankind," Kramer asserts, backing up this strong claim with statistics from the World Health Organization, the World Bank, and

* A less dramatic form of depression, known as dysthymia, is a condition of depressed mood for most of the day, on more days than not, over two years or more in succession, with concurrent disturbances of sleep, appetite, energy, or concentration.

† Knopf, 405 pp., $24.95.

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Harvard's School of Public Health. As of 1990, major depression outdid the usual suspects among medical enormities, laying low over 16 percent of Americans during the course of a lifetime and over 6 percent in a given year. In losses to productivity, it is more costly than heart disease or all cancers combined.

HOW, THEN, could anyone resist Kramer's call to wipe depression off the map? And yet, he tells us, although no one misses the presence of smallpox in our lives, there are those who are unwilling to see an end to depression—their own or others'. Heroic melancholy dies hard.

There are some bad reasons for this, among which Kramer puts his finger on a kind of moral vanity; but there are some good reasons as well, which he does not search deeply enough. As we have seen, Kramer himself acknowledges the extent to which antidepressants are increasingly used as "mood-brighteners," prescribed for persons not generally considered mentally ill but looking to improve their quality of life. This stirs a moral hornets' nest. In brief, the new psychopharmacology championed by Kramer raises a very large question: what is everlasting in the human condition, and what can and ought to be changed?

One who has written acutely about these matters is Leon Kass, the biochemist, physician, and philosopher who until recently headed the President's Council on Bioethics. Kass is all for the treatment of mental illness with psychotropic drugs. But he fears that individuals obsessed with their own well-being and unable to resist the allure of safe chemical pleasure will habitually use Prozac's revved-up pharmacological descendants the same way that Aldous Huxley's fictional denizens of the future in *Brave New World* use "soma": to induce a permanent state of unearned contentment, even bliss.

For Aristotle as for other great moral philosophers, Kass reminds us, happiness and moral virtue are to be found in activity done well, and are the products of will, effort, and devotion. Kramer, for his part, tries to be simultaneously on Prozac's side and Aristotle's. In his clinical experience, he reports somewhat defensively, "the people whose level of distress did not rise to the level of illness . . . did not resemble the struggling, handicapped, often socially isolated patients I had seen respond to Prozac." Besides, he writes, episodes of apparently sub-clinical pain can frequently mark depression and manic depression in their early stages; prudent intervention before severe mental illness sets in can prevent years of suffering and change the course of a life. As for the fear that antidepressant drugs substitute the simulacrum of happiness for the real thing, Kramer replies that SSRI's do not make people happy; they only make it possible for them more ardently to pursue those "ordinary and even noble human activities" in which true happiness resides.

Be all that as it may, the moral perplexities that psychoactive drugs even more effective than Prozac will pose for the future are inescapable, and the cultural sea-change that Kramer wants psychiatry to bring about would extend far beyond the writing of happier poems and novels. The widespread success of Prozac and its supercharged descendants, not only in eradicating major depression but also in ameliorating ordinary unhappiness, would transform the way most people think of their lives.

BOTH BIBLICAL religion and classical philosophy, despite the irreconcilable differences between them, share a certain sense that human life is shot through with unavoidable suffering, and that there are fixed limits to human happiness. Wisdom resides in understanding and accepting those limits. It is essential to try to improve oneself, by strenuous moral effort, as far as one's nature allows—indeed, this endless aspiration toward an unattainable ideal defines moral life and intellectual life at their highest. But it is foolish and dangerous to think that nature, or human nature, can be altogether overcome.

The modern challenge to this ancient understanding hardly began with Prozac. It began, rather, with Francis Bacon and René Descartes, twin originators of the modern scientific project to conquer nature "for the relief of man's estate." As Bacon wrote in *The New Organon* (1620), his definitive reply to Aristotle and Christianity, "Only let the human race recover that right over nature which belongs to it by divine bequest, and let power be given it; the exercise thereof will be governed by sound reason and true religion."

Prozac—and by that word I include the more refined drugs yet to be developed—is Bacon's brainchild. To render neurosis and anxiety, even shyness and poor self-esteem, obsolete by prescribing a pill fulfills the prophecies of modernity's founders. In those prophecies, the understanding of human nature as something circumscribed by God or natural law gives way to a vision of the human substance completely malleable by human beings themselves. Nature's niggardliness with its gifts will be corrected by man's generous solicitude toward man. The inequities of fortune will be smoothed out.

That this alteration in human circumstance will itself require a new religion was something foreseen by Bacon, who in the passage quoted above referred to it rather as the "true religion." In this new dispensation, the ancient Jewish notion of a people chosen by God for extraordinary suffering as well as for spiritual privilege will appear merely quaint, and the ancient Christian notion of God Himself choosing to die an unspeakable death to redeem human sin will be downright laughable. For human beings of every stripe,

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painful spiritual struggle will yield to contentment and peace of mind.

In the light of this pedigree, how can one pretend that the ultimate triumph of Prozac will not produce, contrary to Kramer's sunny fantasy, a transvaluation of the very idea of what life is and ought to be? How many of us, by now long accustomed to taking the body more seriously than the soul, are not *already* disposed to embrace the idea that human nature is reducible to the pertinent neural and endocrine processes? Kramer claims that neurobiology's displacement of mind (not to mention soul) in favor of brain and body is an advance comparable to those of Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud; he does not think to say that it will eventually complete the picture that those earlier theorists began to draw: the picture of man as just another animal in a morally indifferent universe.

THE INTERPLAY of inborn temperament, moral choice, and divine will—or, if one prefers, cosmic accident—is one of the supreme mysteries of our nature. Out of it there emerge the naively wondering questions we begin to ask in childhood and never quite answer as adults. Why am I who I am? Why do I find myself in this particular body? Why this soul (or character) and not another?

Ironically, confidence that our fate is now more in our control than ever before has not dispelled such questions, at least not yet. As "masters and possessors of nature," in Descartes's phrase, we are able to refashion the parts of our psyches that don't suit us; at the same time, however, as captives of the double helix, we operate under the uneasy suspicion of genetic fatefulness, a condition that can lead us to despair of ever knowing true freedom.

As it happens, the model of mental illness that Kramer propounds can accommodate this human complexity, but the brand of psychiatry that more and more doctors practice these days ignores its implications. In the so-called risk/stress description (risk being genetic predisposition, stress the effects of environment and choice), a person of susceptible inborn temperament makes a choice that most people would know to avoid; the ensuing distress makes him more likely to make another poor choice the next time, and the time after that; and eventually the gathering force of sad experience working on unfortunate material may plunge him into illness, from which his moral constitution and its neurochemical imprint make it hard if not impossible to recover.

Morally complex as a Sophoclean tragedy, the risk/stress description recognizes the malign and unavoidable forces to which certain persons are subject, yet also allows for the possibility of overcoming them through the exercise of moral choice, however rare such a triumph may be for those whom nature has marked for a very hard time. The reductionist explanation by biology alone, which Kramer leans toward and which his profession is rushing to embrace, does not do justice to this portrait, or to the mystery that is at the heart of the relation of character and fate.

Nor is anyone likely to penetrate that mystery any time soon. How one comes to be mentally ill is becoming clearer; why this ruinous conjunction of genetic predisposition and bad choice should befall one person rather than another remains dark.

BUT THAT is where Kay Redfield Jamison's *Exuberance: The Passion for Life*, comes in. Jamison, a clinical psychologist and professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, is coauthor of the standard medical textbook on manic depression and sole author of books on suicide and on manic depression in artists. A joyous study of the burning wish to take on the world, *Exuberance* is rich in both science and mystery.

Jamison, who laments psychiatry's "benign neglect" of vitality, resilience, pluck, daring, and sparkle, does much to make good the deficit. Exuberance, she writes,

> carries us places we would not otherwise go—across the savannah, to the moon, into the imagination—and if we ourselves are not so exuberant, we will, caught up in the contagious joy of those who are, be inclined collectively to go yonder. By its pleasures, exuberance lures us from our common places and quieter moods; and—after the victory, the harvest, the discovery of a new idea or an unfamiliar place—it gives ascendant reason to venture forth all over again.

In particular, *Exuberance* celebrates a gallery of riproaring statesmen, naturalists, biologists, physicists, writers, explorers, soldiers, and heroes of cartoon strips and children's books. For Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir, about both of whom Jamison writes at length, gratitude for nature's riches established the mysterious sanctity of life on earth. The greatest scientists, too, have always regarded their calling as an exuberant initiation into sacred mysteries. And exuberance is the natural state of the faithful: as Jamison writes, "The great joy-filled Christian hymns continue the songs of praise from the Old Testament." (That the hymnal is also replete with cries of despair and anguish does not impair this quality of reverent exultation.)

But belief in the Creator is not a prerequisite for ecstasy at creation; even those for whom nature is an inexplicable accident can marvel at its variety and refinement. In fact, Jamison believes that exuberance is itself a force of nature: most of the scientists she interviewed for this book agree that if you're not born with it, nobody will give it to you later in life. And like neuroticism and depression as Kramer describes them, exuberance and robust delight feed on each other: their con-

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fluence is the privilege of the healthy animal, non-human as well as human.

Still, nature, even as it dispenses its most lavish gifts, is not always kind. Jamison reminds us that the sheerest membrane separates rare exaltation from rampaging disease, and that it is all too easy to pass from one to the other. Some of her most distinguished and high-stepping biologists—Nobel-Prize winners like James Watson and Carleton Gajdusek among them—speculate that certain transports of exuberance overlap with mild attacks of mania. When one gets too exalted for his own good, exaltation can devastate. The poet Robert Lowell called his shattering outbreaks of mania "pathological enthusiasm."

Jamison respects and fears these tempests of elation. Her 1995 memoir, *An Unquiet Mind*, recounted her own struggle with manic depression, a condition that lifted her well beyond the reach of reason and flung her broken to the ground. So thrilling were the manias that she did not even think she was ill until a Pacific sunset turned into a hallucinatory bloodbath. A later depression moved her to try suicide, at which she almost succeeded. These are the kinds of horror from which recovery seems truly all but impossible. But with the aid of lithium, and of aggressive psychotherapy, she has enjoyed a life rich in love and successful in work.

In the epilogue to *An Unquiet Mind*, Jamison wrote that she often asked herself whether, given the choice, she would *want* to be manic-depressive. Depression itself is something she finds "awful beyond words or sounds or images," and wishes no further part of. But mania and hypomania (the latter is not quite manic, and can be more than agreeable) are another matter:

> Even when I have been most psychotic—delusional, hallucinating, frenzied—I have been aware of finding new corners in my mind and heart. Some of those corners were incredible and beautiful and took my breath away and made me feel as though I could die right then and the images would sustain me. Some of them were grotesque and ugly and I never wanted to know they were there or to see them again.

However terrible the sights were, though, she decided she *would* choose manic depression, provided she had lithium to keep her under control.

Here, then, is a kind of answer to Kramer from within psychiatry itself. In the days before lithium therapy, Jamison would likely have wound up dead or ravaged beyond recognition. The new psychopharmacology has been the purest blessing for her, as it has been for many others. It has given her the freedom to declare that she would live her life over again, fully accepting her crystalline fragility, the terrors with the joys.

Yet it is not the medical technology, wonderful though it is, that excites the greatest admiration. It is, rather, the patient, whose own courage and fortitude and exuberance enabled her to come to terms with an illness that, despite the benefits of lithium, remains harrowing and pernicious. Not only has Jamison made a happy life for herself, she has used her turbulent experience to further the medical and the popular understanding of mental illness, and to ease the pain of fellow sufferers. Even as psychiatry increasingly becomes what Peter Kramer desires it to be—a neurochemical affair—the highest end of the care of souls, psychiatric and otherwise, must remain the enabling of persons damaged by nature to aspire to the free moral life.

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Music

The Major Minor Mozart

Terry Teachout

Two-hundred-fifty years after his birth, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is in a class apart, perhaps not the most popular of all classical composers—that prize more likely goes to Beethoven or Bach—but without doubt the most admired. Even at the height of postmodernism with its Nietzschean "transvaluation of all values," no critic ever seriously tried to question his singular stature, or even to revalue significantly any of his major works. He remained, and remains, untouchable.

No less remarkably, composers and performers join with critics in this consensus.* One might easily put together an anthology of heartfelt tributes to Mozart's music, were it not that the result would be so repetitious. Suffice it to quote Aaron Copland, writing in 1956 on the occasion of the Mozart bicentenary:

> [W]e can pore over him, dissect him, marvel or carp at him. But in the end there remains something that will not be *seized*. That is why, each time a Mozart work begins . . . we composers listen with a certain awe and wonder, not unmixed with despair. The wonder we share with everyone; the despair comes from the realization that only this one man at this one moment in musical history could have created works that seem so effortless and so close to perfection.

Some part of Copland's wonder, of course, must have stemmed from the fact that its object was a child prodigy without formal education who wrote his first symphony at the age of nine and his last one a mere 23 years later, not long before his early death. All prodigies are by definition interesting, but in Mozart's case the interest is heightened by the fact that he not only died young but left behind an oeuvre so extensive and all-encompassing that it might as well have been the work of a fully mature composer who died at sixty, or even eighty.

In addition, though, there is the still greater puzzle of the apparent incongruity between Mozart's music and his personality. Forget the foul-mouthed idiot savant of Peter Shaffer's movie *Amadeus* (1984); the real Mozart is elusive enough without benefit of caricature. "It is impossible," wrote the great English musicologist Sir Donald Francis Tovey, "to exaggerate the depth and power of Mozart's thought." Yet Karoline Pichler, who knew him socially, described a man "in whose personal intercourse there was absolutely no other sign of unusual power of intellect and almost no trace of intellectual culture, nor of any scholarly or other higher interests." His surviving letters paint a similarly inexplicable portrait of a likable, lively-minded lightweight.

The gap between man and artist is so vast, in fact, that one half-wonders why some ragtag band of ardent pseudo-scholars has not come along to claim that the music of "the man from Salzburg" was really written by a more cultivated and better situated contemporary.

Terry Teachout, Commentary's *regular music critic and the drama critic of the* Wall Street Journal, *is at work on a biography of Louis Armstrong. He blogs about the arts at www.terryteachout.com.*

* I know only one sweepingly negative remark about him by a well-known musician. Noël Coward, who in addition to being a comic playwright was also a songwriter of note, claimed after a visit to the Glyndebourne Festival that Mozart's operas sounded like "piddling on flannel."

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Our feeling of disconnection from Mozart the man—what Copland speaks of as our inability to "seize" him—extends to the works themselves. Except for the greater sophistication that came with age, there is no readily apparent relationship between the expressive qualities of Mozart's music and the emotional landmarks of his life. He was an 18th-century craftsman whose pieces arose not from "inspiration" but as a result of pressing professional demands. In the words of the late Stanley Sadie, whose final book, the newly published *Mozart: The Early Years, 1756-1781*,* was to have been the first installment of a comprehensive two-volume biography:

> Mozart . . . never wrote a piece of music simply because he felt like it or because of some "inner need" but virtually always because it was in some sense a requirement.

This deprives the biographer of his usual stock-in-trade, for it means that Mozart cannot be written about in the same way as, say, Beethoven or Schubert (or, for that matter, Shakespeare), interweaving life and work in a psychologically illuminating manner. In particular, whatever quality makes certain of his compositions "deeper" and "darker" than others is inaccessible to speculation.

Yet some are indeed deeper and darker, and one whole group of these latter pieces, to which I want to devote the balance of this essay, stands mystifyingly apart from the rest. These are the comparatively few multi-movement works cast in minor keys: two piano sonatas out of seventeen, two piano concertos out of 27, two symphonies out of 41. While these and other minor-key works of similar scale are not necessarily of higher quality than their major-key counterparts, they do share a special intensity of expression not found in such masterpieces as the C Major Symphony, K. 551, familiarly known as the "Jupiter."

This intensity manifests itself in many ways, from the turbulence of the first movement of the D Minor Piano Concerto, K. 466, to the crisp austerity of the E Minor Violin Sonata, K. 304. Sometimes, as in the G Minor String Quintet, K. 516, one perceives the minor-key quality as a tint, a single aspect of a carefully balanced, classically poised totality. At other times, as in the unabashedly stern A Minor Piano Sonata, K. 310, it becomes overwhelming, infusing an entire piece with its distinctive coloration. In every case, though, the large-scale minor-key pieces, different as they are from one another, are similar in their power to stir the listener's emotions—just as one feels, whether rightly or wrongly, that Mozart's own emotions were more fully engaged in the act of their creation, and that in them he was somehow playing for higher stakes.†

Many performers have said as much about the minor-key works, including the Austrian pianist Alfred Brendel:

> The pieces in the minor do more than just present a dark backdrop to Mozart's brilliance. . . . I know of no other composer fundamentally transformed while writing in minor keys.

But at least as many commentators have been reluctant to ascribe such distinctive qualities to these works, preferring to concentrate on the features they have in common with the minor-key music of Mozart's contemporaries and predecessors. Nor should this reluctance be dismissed as mere pedantry. For all his stupendous gifts, Mozart was a man of his time, and the seeming "perfection" of his music, as Copland reminds us, arises in large part from the fact that he had at his fingertips a fully developed musical language that had yet to be disrupted by the innovations of Beethoven and the later Romantics.

Mozart himself made no known statements indicating that he regarded his minor-key works as exceptional. Does this mean, then, that his use of the minor key was merely an arbitrary classical-period convention? Or did it indeed signify something more? In order to answer this question, we must start by making an effort to hear the minor-key works as they are, rather than as the Romantics thought they were.

To appreciate the difference between Mozart's minor- and major-key works, it helps to look at what they have in common.

To my mind, no one has done a better job of concisely explaining what makes Mozart Mozart than Donald Tovey, whose essay on the G Minor Symphony, K. 550, the greatest of the minor-key works, is a convenient starting point. Tovey offers a seeming paradox that will startle many readers: "We can only belittle and vulgarize our ideas of Mozart by trying to construe him as a tragic artist." What could he possibly mean, especially with reference to the G Minor Symphony, still widely regarded as the *locus classicus* of tragedy in music? The answer, Tovey replies, is that Mozart was up to something altogether different: "Mozart's whole musical language is, and remains throughout, the language of comic opera."

This bald-faced assertion, so surprising at first glance, turns out on closer inspection to be all but self-evident. From the rush and bustle of the outer movements of the G Minor Symphony (whose compositional language Tovey likens to Rossini's Overture to *The Barber of Seville*) to the wittily "theatrical" exchanges between soloist and orchestra in the later piano concertos, one finds in Mozart's mature instrumental works an abundance of proof that he thought of all his music in dramatic terms—and that the

* W.W. Norton, 644 pp., $35.00.

† Recommended recordings of these and other minor-key works by Mozart are listed in the discography at the end of this piece.

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kind of "drama" he had in mind was 18th-century *opera buffa*, abstracted at times to the point of sublimity but still essentially comic.

For the Romantic of deepest hue, such a claim must necessarily have the effect of trivializing Mozart's minor-key music. But Mozart himself, lest we forget, was not a Romantic—indeed, Romanticism per se did not exist in his lifetime—and thus was not afflicted by the paralyzing idea that comedy is unserious. As Tovey goes on to say:

> If we are to understand Mozart, we must rid our minds of the presumption that a tragic issue is intrinsically greater than any other. . . . [I]t is not only difficult to see depths of agony in the rhythms and idioms of comedy, but it is not very intelligent to attempt to see them. Comedy uses the language of real life; and people in real life often find the language of comedy the only dignified expression for their deepest feelings.

Still, there remains a vast difference between the expressive effects of the "Jupiter" and G Minor Symphonies. Though both were shaped in the mold of *opera buffa*, few listeners will fail to hear lightness and liberation in the one and dark introspection in the other. Can this be explained solely by a failure of historical imagination on our part? Or is the difference between the two works as real as we feel it to be?

WHILE STANLEY SADIE does not directly address this question in *Mozart: The Early Years*, he does deal specifically and in detail with Mozart's youthful embrace of the minor key, and in so doing sheds invaluable light on the style that is heard for the first time in the "Little" G Minor Symphony, K. 183, composed in 1773.

In discussing this work, Sadie is quick to place it in its proper historical context. Not only had other composers of the *Sturm und Drang* school already turned out numerous minor-key symphonies full of "syncopated repeated notes, snapped rhythms, tremolandos, large leaps, urgently repeated phrases, and forceful orchestral unison passages," but Mozart himself had included similarly impassioned minor-key passages in his early operas. As Sadie rightly concludes: "[W]e have to be on guard against any facile assumption that Mozart and his contemporaries brought the same emotional associations to such music as we do today."

Yet, having issued this warning, Sadie goes on to declare the "Little" G Minor Symphony to be Mozart's "first 'great' work, his earliest, it seems to 20th-century listeners, to enter the realms of serious human feeling." And for all his understandable wariness about reading Romantic preconceptions into a piece of classical music, Sadie is surely right to use such unabashedly emotive language to describe the "Little" G Minor. However much Mozart may have drawn on earlier examples, however deeply rooted the symphony is in the classical style, it is hard to hear it without sensing that the seventeen-year-old Mozart had for the first time grasped the nettle of life.

To be sure, one may say this without necessarily leaping to the further conclusion that the "Little" G Minor must somehow mirror a specific event or cluster of events. At the same time, however, it would be wrong to conclude that Mozart's life was emotionally uneventful, or that his music had no relationship whatsoever to exterior circumstances. Rather, one must make such interpretations with the greatest of care.

Of particular interest on this count are Sadie's remarks about two important minor-key works written around the time of the death of Mozart's mother in 1778, the E Minor Violin Sonata and A Minor Piano Sonata:

> There is no real reason to imagine that he used his music as vehicle for the expression of his own personal feelings: at this period, at least, there is certainly no evidence that he did so—no statement in a letter about the significance of any work to life events. . . . He in fact wrote to Leopold [his father] that in the days of his mother's illness he "had ample leisure for composing, but could not have written a single note." His letters written on the day of her death and in the ensuing days do not suggest that the emotions he was experiencing were of a kind that he would want to express in music.

On the other hand, Sadie leaves no doubt that the two sonatas embody *some* form of strong emotion, going so far as to speak of the "bleak qualities" of the E Minor Violin Sonata and—even more notably—declaring that the "sustained urgency and agitation" of the first movement of the A Minor Piano Sonata "seem almost to embody anger and frustration."

BLEAKNESS, URGENCY, anger, frustration: these are not words one normally uses to describe 18th-century classical music. Yet just as they flow easily from the pen of a modern-day Mozart scholar fully aware of the need to hear Mozart's music in its historical context, so are they more than likely to spring to the mind of a modern-day listener who hears one of Mozart's minor-key compositions for the very first time.

No less surprising is that we are using them to describe the work of a young man. When artists in their twenties, however talented, succumb to unhappiness, the fruits of their sorrow tend to be self-indulgent. Not so Mozart. From the "Little" G Minor onward, his minor-key music was emotionally disciplined, and as the emotions grew more powerful, so did the discipline become more rigorous and far-reaching.

This progression reaches its climax in the later and better-known of Mozart's two symphonies in G

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minor. Here the inherent tension between passionate emotion and classical syntax resolves itself in a perfect balance of technical means and expressive ends. Mozart transposes the comic language of his *opera buffa* style into the minor key in order to say . . . what?

It would be the height of superfluity to try to put into words the "meaning" of the G Minor Symphony. But I have always been struck by what I think of as the *stoic* quality of this touchstone of Western art. It is as if Mozart were telling us something so profoundly serious that it could only be said, as it is said by Prospero in *The Tempest*, when accompanied by the saddest of smiles:

> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

That such ultimate truths can indeed be told without recourse to words is one of the supreme mysteries of Western art. That they were accessible to an unsophisticated, unintellectual ex-prodigy who died at the age of thirty-five is a mystery of another kind altogether.

No wonder, then, that Aaron Copland was unable to consider Mozart's achievement without feeling a touch of despair. It is, after all, what most of us feel when forced to measure ourselves against the yardstick of genius.

Mozart in Minor: A Selective Discography

Comparatively few conductors and instrumentalists trained during the 19th century programmed Mozart's music with any frequency, and their interpretations typically ran to the sentimental. It was not until the 1930's that a distinctively "classical" style of Mozart playing began to find its way onto record. Since then, Mozart's minor-key works have all been recorded numerous times in unprettified versions. Here are ten of the best performances currently available on CD:

1933: The Swiss pianist Edwin Fischer, who specialized in the Austro-German classics, was also a gifted conductor who frequently led his own concerto performances from the keyboard (as Mozart himself had previously done). His bracingly dramatic self-conducted version of the D Minor Concerto, accompanied by the London Philharmonic, is one of the most contemporary-sounding of early Mozart recordings (Appian APR 5523).

1934: Artur Schnabel was one of the first celebrity instrumentalists to make Mozart's music a central part of his repertoire, both in concert and on record. In addition to several concertos and sonatas, he recorded the G Minor Piano Quartet, K. 478, with members of the Pro Arte Quartet, a Franco-Belgian ensemble with an old-fashioned Romantic ensemble style that the group modified in response to Schnabel's passionate directness (Pearl GEM 0104).

1937: Ignace Jan Paderewski, who like Schnabel studied with the celebrated piano teacher Theodor Leschetizsky, was a Chopin specialist widely considered to be the quintessential Romantic-era virtuoso (though his technique was in fact notoriously erratic). His only Mozart recording, made near the end of his career, is a graceful, rhythmically free version of the A Minor Rondo, K. 511, in which the 19th-century view of Mozart can be heard at its most attractive (Pearl GEMM CD 9499).

1950: Dinu Lipatti would have been the greatest classical pianist of the postwar era had he not died of cancer at the age of thirty-three. Among the handful of recordings he left behind is a taut yet lyrical version of the A Minor Sonata that confirms his reputation as an artist of unrivaled purity (EMI Classics CDU 5 67003 2).

1962: Glenn Gould recorded only one Mozart piano concerto, the C Minor, which he claimed not to like. Be that as it may, his performance, attractively accompanied by Walter Susskind and the CBC Symphony, is noteworthy for Gould's electrifyingly incisive playing of the solo part (Sony SMK 52626).

1968: Benjamin Britten, one of the few major 20th-century composers to have distinguished himself as an interpreter of music other than his own, made many Mozart recordings, the finest of which is his version with the English Chamber Orchestra of the G Minor Symphony. Unusually, Britten takes all the repeats indicated by Mozart, thereby expanding the scale of the piece in a manner consistent with his vigorous yet classically balanced conducting. This recording is available as part of a two-CD set that also includes Britten's equally impressive 1971 conducting of the "Little" G Minor Symphony (London 444 323-2LF2, two CD's).

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1973: In addition to recording extensively as a soloist, Arthur Grumiaux, a Belgian violinist of uncommon stylishness, also led a trio whose recorded performances of Mozart's six string quintets (augmented by the violinist Arpad Gérecz and the violist Max Lesueur) remain definitive three decades later. The jewel of the set is the lucid, supremely elegant G Minor Quintet (Philips 470 950-2PTR3, three CD's).

1989: At the very end of his long life, Vladimir Horowitz recorded the B Minor Adagio, K. 540, in a session that took place in the living room of his New York apartment. Though the arch-Romantic Horowitz played little of Mozart's music in public, he was fascinated by the "seriousness, solemnity, and pathos" of this free-standing minor-key movement, and not least by the chromatic inflections that he found to "foreshadow Chopin and Wagner." Perhaps not surprisingly, Horowitz's interpretation, if rhythmically freer than what one would expect from a younger pianist, is both shapely and disciplined (DGG 427 772-2GH).

1994: Since the 70's, many recordings of Mozart's music have been made on replicas of 18th-century instruments played in a musicologically informed style that seeks to reproduce that of the composer's own time. Comparatively few of these performances, however, have been as effective or memorable as those given on modern instruments. Among the few is William Christie's recording with Les Arts Florissants, the French period-instrument ensemble, of the unfinished D Minor Requiem, K. 626, in the standard version completed by Mozart's pupil Franz Xaver Süssmayr. The lean and transparent instrumental textures of this highly dramatic performance, whose vocal soloists include the tenor Christoph Prégardien and the contralto Nathalie Stutzmann, let the choral parts come through with unusual clarity (Erato 0630-10697-2).

2004: Hilary Hahn, the most gifted of today's young violinists, recently released an album of four Mozart violin sonatas that includes a pristinely fresh version of the two-movement E Minor Sonata (the composer's only work in that key), sensitively accompanied by Natalie Zhu, her regular recital partner (DGG B0004771-02GH).

ALL OF these recordings can be purchased online by viewing this article during the month of January on COMMENTARY's website:
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Books in Review

Unintelligent Design

The Republican War on Science

by Chris Mooney

Basic. 342 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Kevin Shapiro

EVER SINCE John Stuart Mill identified Britain's Conservatives as "the stupid party," it has been fashionable for leftists to deride their political opponents as anti-intellectual, backward-thinking clods. The trope has figured prominently in recent American presidential politics, with candidates of the Democratic party posing, sometimes ostentatiously, as defenders of reason and all things scientific. Al Gore, known in some circles as the inventor of the Internet, preached tirelessly that the Republican refusal to combat climate change would soon result in global catastrophe. In 2004, John Edwards implied that paraplegics would soon be able to walk again—if not for George W. Bush's benighted policies on stem-cell research. Unfortunately for Gore and Edwards, these admonitions did not impress the electorate.

Chris Mooney is not about to give up the fight. A correspondent for the left-liberal *American Prospect* and for *Seed* magazine, which covers the role of science in culture, Mooney has long been interested in the intersection of technology and politics. But he is no neutral sociologist of science; he is a political journalist, and a frankly partisan one at that. In *The Republican War on Science*, he makes the case that conservatives in general, and President Bush in particular, have adopted an attitude toward science that is not merely skeptical but actually hostile. As a result, he argues, the government is becoming estranged from the scientific establishment, and is rapidly depleting its capacity to make decisions based on the best available knowledge.

HOW DID this come about? The first several chapters of Mooney's book are intended to provide some historical perspective. One early turning point, as Mooney tells it, came during the presidential campaign of 1964, which pitted Barry Goldwater and his zealous young followers against scientists concerned about the arms race with the Soviet Union and the possibility of nuclear war.

Then, in the 1970's, new conservative think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation began to supply business-friendly research and expertise, supposedly at odds with the scientific mainstream—thereby setting the stage for the "politicization" of science. This trend accelerated under the Reagan administration, which Mooney accuses of marginalizing and manipulating scientific advisers, ignoring the crises of AIDS and acid rain, promoting creationism, and recklessly pushing for missile defense despite a "consensus" that it was unworkable.

Mooney grants that the abuse of science in the Reagan era was haphazard, and not yet part of a systematic effort to undermine mainstream research. But that changed in 1994, when the new Republican

KEVIN SHAPIRO, *a research fellow in neuroscience and a student at Harvard Medical School, contributed "This Is Your Brain on Nanobots" to last month's* COMMENTARY.

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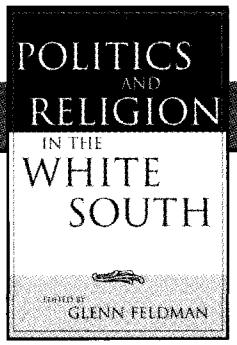

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majority abolished the Office of Technology Assessment, Congress's clearinghouse for scientific information. With this non-partisan body out of the way, elected representatives could consult whichever experts suited their purposes, including industry shills and fringe contrarians who were happy to drum up phony controversies by disagreeing with the majority of researchers in their fields.

Simultaneously, Republican congressmen began to push for the use of what they disingenuously trumpeted as "sound science" in the making of government decisions, including the requirement of peer review for science-based assessments. To the naive observer, this might seem like a laudable idea, but Mooney describes it as an industry-backed attempt to raise the bar on regulation, obstructing the enactment of tougher environmental standards and more aggressive public-health initiatives. By the time George W. Bush was elected to office in 2000, the stage had been set for the wholesale subversion of science that is now under way.

WHEN IT comes to current abuses, Mooney describes basically two kinds: those motivated by the desire to appease business interests (particularly the energy and agricultural sectors) and those intended to mollify religious traditionalists.

Into the first category falls the familiar issue of global warming, along with slightly less apocalyptic battles over herbicide use, fast food, and the regulation of mercury emissions. On all of these issues, Mooney accuses Republicans of paying undue attention to scientists who are skeptical of the need for government involvement to avert crisis, when in fact, he says, "mainstream" scientists are united in the opposite view. He also notes that these contrarian scientists often receive funding from the private sector—which, to his mind, renders them suspect, even though he concedes that the validity of scientific research does not depend on the means by which it was financed.

Religious conservatives, for their part, have misused science to promote a moral agenda that includes opposition to abortion, stem-cell research, and the teaching in public schools of evolution by natural selection, the cornerstone of modern biology. At the same time, writes Mooney, they prop up the thinly-veiled creationist pseudoscience of Intelligent Design. The net effect has been to alienate life scientists and to undermine their work, potentially jeopardizing the United States's position at the forefront of biomedical research.

MOONEY IS no doubt right to expect the "damning stuff" in his book to gain attention; it has already begun to serve as a source of talking points for Democratic politicians and assorted left-wing interest groups. But he cannot expect it to be taken as a serious indictment of conservative Republicans, because *The Republican War on Science* is not a serious book.

Its unserious nature is evident from the first few pages, where Mooney attempts to provide the reader with a primer on conservative thought—summed up in his capsule definition as "a political philosophy that generally resists change." No less ignorant is his claim that the alleged Republican hostility to science is fueled by conservative distrust of "big government," the benefactor of much scientific research. Yet he does not actually discuss science funding in this book, and for good reason: in fact, public expenditures for research have exploded since Republicans took control of Congress, with the budget of the National Institutes of Health, for example, having roughly doubled between 1998 and 2003. If Republicans really are at war with science, they are employing an awfully dumb battle plan.

Such diverting lapses aside, is

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there really evidence that scientific knowledge has been systematically suppressed or distorted for political gain? In some cases, Mooney's charges are clearly overblown; for example, he rips President Bush for having "lied" in 2001 about the number of stem-cell lines available for federally funded research, when in fact the President merely cited the most accurate information available at the time.

Moreover, it is difficult to understand exactly what is so bad about scientists receiving financial support from the business sector. According to the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences, industry funded about 62 percent of research and development in the U.S. in fiscal year 2004, far outstripping the amounts spent by the federal government and nonprofit institutions. Biotechnology firms already provide much of the funding for embryonic stem-cell research, a field that Mooney takes pains to praise as important and promising. Why should this be any less suspect than petroleum-industry funding for energy research, or agrobusiness funding for research on food safety?

In other instances, Mooney merely parrots the views of his informants, most of whom are left-leaning scientists and ex-government officials—not exactly disinterested parties. On the issue of climate change, for example, he approvingly cites prophets of global warming, while portraying skeptical scientists as cranks (at best) or dishonest (at worst). He even insinuates, quite wrongly, that there is *no* meaningful scientific dissent on the issue. He knows this, evidently, because proponents of global warming have told him so.

Even the few credible examples of alleged right-wing scientific distortion in the book hardly rise to the level of genuine political abuse. Intelligent Design is an unscientific theory, but the Republican party has hardly made a systematic effort to promote it; the effort has instead been spearheaded by private institutions with only vague ties to some conservative politicians. Mooney is probably correct in claiming that the Bush administration has overemphasized the health risks of abortion, but it seems doubtful that this will have any meaningful impact on the availability of abortion in the United States. And perhaps it is true that Republicans in Congress have been overly reluctant to recognize the link between sugar consumption and obesity—but this is a far cry from asserting that the food industry should be held responsible for the detrimental effects of overeating, a position Mooney seems to endorse.

At times, indeed, it is Mooney and his sources who are clearly the ones guilty of misrepresenting or distorting scientific work. Take the controversy over mercury contamination in fish. On the one hand, it is fairly certain that the ingestion of mercury (in the form of methylmercury, an organic metabolite) is harmful to brain development. On the other hand, and contrary to Mooney's rather hysterical assertions, there is no good evidence that the consumption of *ocean fish* containing trace amounts of methylmercury poses any real danger. Mooney heaps praise on a study conducted in the Faeroe Islands that claims to establish such a link, while disparaging a different study, of Seychelles Islanders, that shows no such link. But the Seychelles study was the better designed of the two—and probably more relevant to the question at hand, since its subjects actually ate large quantities of fish, while the Faeroe Islanders consumed mostly whale meat.

Many of Mooney's "abuses" boil down to complaints about the tendency of conservative politicians to err on the side of caution when it comes to using science in order to justify an expansion of federal power. By contrast, Mooney himself

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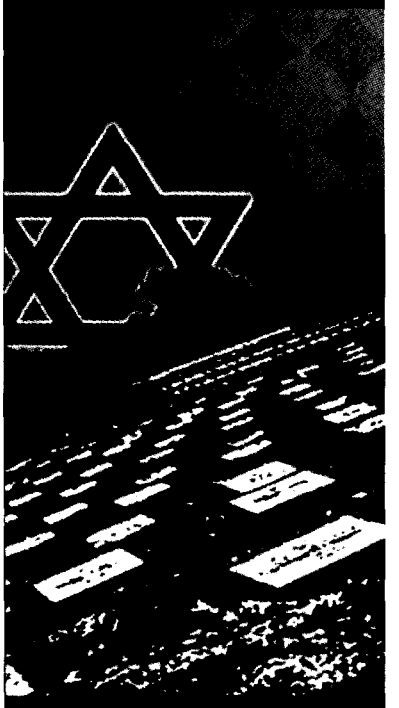
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seems to be a believer in the "precautionary principle," popularized by the biologist and environmental activist Rachel Carson in the 1970's. This holds that the government should act to combat environmental threats even before there is incontrovertible evidence of damage.

As it happens, many scientists—some of whom spend their careers straining to provide proof of elusive correlations in the natural world—share this view. But the precautionary principle is not, properly speaking, a scientific proposition; nor is it inherently anti-scientific to insist on a higher standard of evidence when formulating government policies—especially those with far-reaching consequences and enormous costs.

In this light, Mooney seems almost unhinged in his rant against Republican efforts to institute peer review and data-quality standards for reports by federal agencies and advisory committees. In effect, he is compelled to argue that, while there should be a high standard of scrutiny for publishing a paper in a scientific journal that may be read by a few hundred people, it is unreasonable to demand similar scrutiny for a policy decision that could affect untold numbers of people at a price tag of billions of dollars.

In the end, the Republican "war" on science has less to do with any demonstrable pattern of abuse than with a series of political battles over the notion that government should be free to put science at the service of potentially costly and unpopular liberal programs. The fact that many scientists support these programs is interesting, but irrelevant; deserving as they may be of respect for their work, scientists, unlike politicians, are not answerable for the public good.

Alpha Female

Are Men Necessary?
When Sexes Collide

by Maureen Dowd

Putnam. 352 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

SOME OPINION columnists generate buzz because they make important arguments, others because they have fabulous red hair and shapely legs. Or so one would gather from the photo of the columnist Maureen Dowd that appeared recently in the *New York Times Magazine* along with an excerpt from her new book, *Are Men Necessary? When Sexes Collide*. Clad in black fishnet stockings and blood-red heels, Dowd lounges atop a barstool, a sultry look on her face. She stares out at us as a new type, the celebrity columnist—dressed by stylists, pomaded by make-up artists, posed by fashion photographers, and tended, no doubt, by an entourage of public-relations flunkies.

Still, there is a book to consider. In *Are Men Necessary?*, which consists of expanded and updated *New York Times* pieces reaching back to the late 1980's, Dowd's ostensible subject is relations between the sexes in a postfeminist world. As she concedes, the book is not a sustained argument, but rather the "diligent notes . . . of a fascinated observer," collected under a title echoing James Thurber and E.B. White's classic *Is Sex Necessary?* But the leggy columnist is never far from her true passion, a peculiar and relatively new variety of cultural politics.

SO HOW are things going for women these many decades after the feminist revolution? Not well, says Dowd. "Feminism lasted a nanosecond; the backlash has lasted forty years." Long after the last bra was burned, she laments, people still prefer their authority figures male. They like politicians who sport some "alpha oomph." Presidential wannabes may appear to be talking about issues, but in the national subconscious, another competition is taking place as they try to show themselves "superior in the knightly virtues of temperance, loyalty, and courage." Even today, the public remains ambivalent about female power. "People liked Hillary and Martha a lot more," Dowd observes, "once they were 'broken,'" like over-spirited horses.

Not that women haven't colluded in the dashing of feminist dreams. They have given ground in the corporate and political world and, for that matter, at home, where instead of declaring "Hear me roar!," they knuckle under to the screaming demands of children. Avid to please men, women these days have "return[ed] to basics"—come-hither murmurs, feline gestures, girly ruffles, heartfelt glances. They engage in the courtship game as fiercely as any Jane Austen heroine, playing hard-to-get and following each other lemming-like to beauty clinics and plastic surgeons so that they can look like "Playmate bombshells."

It is men, though, to whom Dowd assigns most of the blame for the diminished fortunes of feminism. Men just do not like "uppity alpha women" (including, presumably, women columnists for the *New York Times*). Nor are men looking for a relationship of equals; they want women who will take care of them. Dowd is struck by the number of recent movies in which a high-status hero falls for his maid. Herself a descendant of "statuesque six-foot-tall women who cleaned up and acted as nannies for some of America's first families," she seizes on the irony: "I was always so proud of achieving more," she observes. "How odd then to find out now that being a maid would have

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enhanced my chances with men."

An accomplished student of male vanity, insecurity, and loutishness, especially as they appear in politics, Dowd dwells on Al Gore's earth-toned wardrobe and John Kerry's botoxed forehead. She finds fault with the current administration for its high testosterone levels, but at the same time chides Dick Cheney for throwing "hissy fits" and Donald Rumsfeld for his "hot flashes over 'Old Europe.'" Writing about Senator Bob Packwood, who was hounded from office for sexual improprieties, she wonders what his colleagues, the womanizing Senators Kennedy and Dodd, might have been thinking at the time: "A fine institution sullied by such a pathetic record of incomplete passes?"

Dowd assures us, tongue in cheek, that the ugly necessity of relying on men will become moot once technology and evolution make them irrelevant: "They're doomed, poor darlings." She is much taken with research by evolutionary biologists showing that the Y chromosome, which is responsible for maleness, has been "shedding genes willy-nilly . . . and is now a fraction of the size of its partner, the X chromosome." Sperm production is declining and, anyway, technology eventually will make it possible for women to reproduce without men. Does this explain the rise of the dandyish "metrosexual," with his facials, wrinkle cream, and flamboyant clothes? As she quips, "Better to be an X chromosome than an ex-chromosome."

What to make of this performance? There are moments, to be sure, when Dowd demonstrates her considerable writerly talent and wit. I cracked a grin at her description of MSNBC's Brian Williams as the network's "hair apparent," and the bit about the Packwood affair is good. But the dearth of sustained thought, of an idea embellished and followed rather than rummaged savagely for puns, leaves a reader

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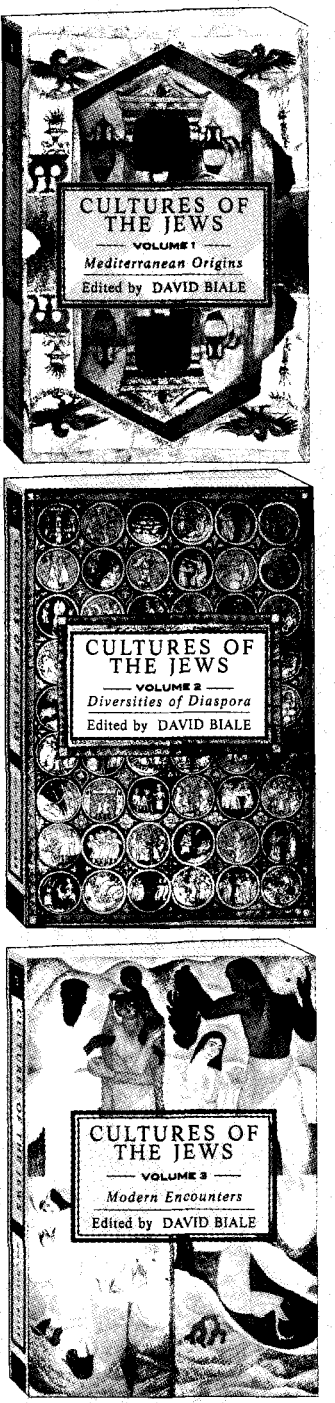

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holding at best a pained, polite smile. Padded with wisecracks, rhetorical tricks, and extended quotes, *Are Men Necessary?* comes off not as a coherent collection, let alone a book, but as the stand-up routine of an aging and rather desperate comedienne whose drummer mechanically hits his cymbal to let you know a laugh-line has just passed by. Take my joke, *please*.

As for her ostensible subject, not only does Dowd have nothing new to say about men *or* women but, for all her exertions, she manages to miss one of the most disturbing changes in postfeminist America: the feminization of the news. Perhaps she is being modest; she is, after all, its founding genius. The *New York Times* has given her a piece of the most prized real estate in opinion journalism. How does she use it? To dish bitchy gossip, to snark about people's sloppy habits and bad taste, to focus relentlessly on personality and celebrity. If she ever thinks through the issues of the day, she has yet to let her readers in on it: as she once wrote in relief about a discussion with President Clinton, "at least he didn't want to talk about GATT and NAFTA." Week after week, her column confirms the very stereotypes she professes to abhor.

Dowd is hardly alone, of course, in blurring the line between style-conscious entertainment and news. She writes for what you might call latte America, or those whom Howard Dean has recently labeled merlot Democrats. Better than anyone else, she provides "edgy" opinion for the liberal smart set, something the *Times* clearly feels it needs as its customers flee to hotter media. What she offers these readers is the smug superiority, minus any intellectual heavy lifting, that pervades talk radio and cable TV.

Indeed, for all of her strained intellectual pretensions, Maureen Dowd is perhaps best thought of as the Gray Lady's answer to Bill O'Reilly. She is loved (and hated) not for her smarts, but because she has a talent for ridicule and knows exactly how to flatter her fans' many prejudices. But—is she necessary?

Prosaic

The Poems of Charles Reznikoff 1918-1975

edited by Seamus Cooney

Black Sparrow. 400 pp. $45.00 (hardcover), $21.95 (paperback)

Reviewed by
Hillel Halkin

CHARLES REZNIKOFF (1894-1976) described his own poetry, which has undergone something of a revival in recent years and is now available in this revised edition of a 1989 volume, as well as did anyone. In a short poem composed in the late 1940's or early 50's, he wrote:

> I have neither the time nor the
> weaving skill, perhaps,
> for the intricate medallions the
> Persians know;
> my rugs are the barbaric fire-
> worshipper's:
> how blue the waters flow,
> how red the fiery sun,
> how brilliant a green the grass is,
> how blinding white the snow.

This is a fairly typical Reznikoff poem: transparent in meaning, simple in its choice of words, free of metaphor, lacking regular meter, and yet here and there with the ability to surprise. To call a Persian carpet a "medallion" is odd; but "barbaric," though consistent with "fire-worshipper," is precisely what this poem is not. On the contrary, it is as well-behaved as a quiet schoolchild.

For those, like myself, whose appreciation of Reznikoff is limited, lines like these help to explain why. It is not just that their "barbarism" remains an empty pledge. (When Walt Whitman, the first major English-language poet to break with metrical verse, promised his readers a "barbaric yawp," he yawped.) It is that, although they speak of embracing immediacy and stating simple things keenly felt and observed as opposed to the artificial and contrived, they have not a keen but rather a dull edge. Water that is merely "blue," a sun that is "fiery red," grass that is "brilliant green," snow that is "blinding white": nowhere is there a single fresh or individuated perception to make us feel that the poet has carefully looked at any of these things.

This may be because Reznikoff was in fact not a very close observer of the ordinary realities he wished to celebrate. But in addition, his very determination to appear natural at all costs was constricting. He and his fellow "Objectivists," to use the name given in the 1920's to a group of American poets that included William Carlos Williams and Louis Zukofsky, wanted their poetry to be a camera, so to speak, that photographed the world as it was. In this they were a part of the great modernist rebellion against the mannerism of much late-19th-century aesthetics. Bauhaus architecture, atonal music, severely geometrical abstract painting—all sought in their different ways to do away with frills and enhancements by creating art out of only the most basic forms and materials.

Yet in poetry, as elsewhere, to make a fetish of naturalness can lead to a renunciation of art itself. Although it may be more "natural" to speak of a "fiery red sun" than of a "torrent salmon sun," as Dylan Thomas does in one of his poems (who on earth would ever "naturally" call anything "torrent salmon"?), the latter phrase affects us as the former does not, evoking a sun never seen by us before and linking it metaphorically with the fish in the sea and the flow of the tide, together with which it is racing tu-

HILLEL HALKIN *reviewed Yuri Slezkine's* The Jewish Century *in last month's issue.*

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multuously toward the day's end. For a poet to avoid all metaphor on principle, as the Objectivists tried to do, because metaphor takes its eye off the object of description onto something hidden from sight, is like a traveler avoiding all suitcases because they contain clothing that cannot be seen. To travel so light is encumbering.

At their most "natural," Reznikoff's poems cease being poetry entirely. Consider this street scene in New York, the city in which he lived nearly his entire life:

> The face of the old woman
> sitting alone on a park bench
> is suddenly flushed
> and she begins to curse and
> scream.
> I can understand the horns of
> the automobiles
> screaming at each other
> as they stream out of the park
> into the crowded street:
> but, sitting alone on a park
> bench,
> at whom is she screaming?

As a vignette of urban alienation, in which cars that "scream" independently of their drivers communicate better than does a crazed, lonely woman, this is nicely recorded. But it would make no difference if it appeared as prose. The reason is that the element of rhythm, which despite the lack of meter is to be found in "I have neither the time nor the weaving skills," is entirely missing here. And while a poem can exist without metaphor, meter, rhyme, alliteration, or wordplay, all of which have served as primary or secondary principles of organization in some traditions of poetry and not in others, it cannot exist without rhythm. That is the point at which it collapses into prose.

There is nothing arbitrary about such an assertion. It is simply to point out that poetry, all over the world, originated in song, which is an intrinsically rhythmic activity. (In some languages, such as Hebrew, the word for "poem" and "song" is the same to this day.) All human activity—vocal, motoric, sexual—becomes increasingly rhythmic as it grows more excited, and poetry, even after being separated from its musical roots, remains language intensified to a higher pitch of excitement than that of ordinary speech or writing. No rhythm, no excitement; no excitement, no poetry.

Which is not to say that Reznikoff cannot sometimes be very good. Here is one time that he is:

> Put it down in your ledger
> among the profits of this day:
> the dark uncertain path of the
> wind
> on the bright water;

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snow on the yellow branches of
the sycamore.

Why is this real poetry? Well, in the first place, it is rhythmic; in fact, in places it scans almost metrically, with its two quick opening, anapestic lines that slow down gravely with the three consecutive stressed syllables of "dark uncertain." (It is the anapests that ingeniously force us to stress the "un-" of "uncertain," which we would not do in ordinary speech.)

Second, Reznikoff's Objectivist principles notwithstanding, it has a metaphor that packs it with meaning: the poet compares himself to a bookkeeper who counts not money but rather profoundly experienced moments as the measure of a day's worth, thus telling us implicitly of his belief that such moments are the real purpose of living. Third, there is the unexpected deflection of color in the last line: prepared for the whiteness of the snow, we get instead the yellow of sycamore—a delicate touch not only because white on yellow is an unusual combination, but because, whereas we all remember the color of snow, we do not all remember the color of sycamore bark.

And lastly, coming back to it again, "the dark uncertain path of the wind/on the bright water" is quite marvelous: those three straight stresses—amid which the dark, doubting "un-" of "uncertain," standing at the poem's exact midpoint, bears its weight like a fulcrum—make us actually feel the erratic wind as it gusts now this way, now that. We may even be forgiven for thinking that it is the poet's subtle metaphor for life itself.

IN A word, Reznikoff is at his best when, while keeping his quiet, understated tone, he disobeys his own rigorously ascetic rules. Now and then he even naughtily permits himself to indulge in a forbidden rhyme. Here is a fine little love poem that ends with one:

You tell me that you write only a
little now.
I wrote this a year or two ago
about a girl whose stories I had
read and wished to meet:
The traveler
whom a bird's notes surprise
—his eyes
search the trees.
And when I met her she was
plain enough.
So is the nightingale, they say—
and I am glad that you do not
belong
to those whose beauty is all song.

Often his strongest poems have a haiku-like quality, which is not surprising when one considers the influence on the Objectivists, via Pound and the Imagists, of Chinese and Japanese verse. One goes:

You must not suppose
that all who live on Fifth Avenue
are happy: I have heard the gulls
screaming
from the reservoir in Central Park.

(Does the speaker himself live on Fifth Avenue, overlooking the park? Would he, too, like to scream like a gull?)

Others, actually haiku-like in form, have a mordant wit:

Horsefly,
on the window of the automobile
agency:
you're out of business now.

Splat! Or:

Permit me to warn you
against this automobile rushing
to embrace you
with outstretched fender.

I like that. It is actually less Japanese than Roman in tone, almost like an epigram by Martial. And so much politer than shouting, "Watch out for that car!"

REZNIKOFF HAS the reputation of being the most "Jewish" of prominent American Jewish poets (as a prose writer, which he was too, he stands out less in this respect), and the amount of verse that he devoted to expressly Jewish subject matter is indeed large. The son of immigrant parents from Russia, he wrote several long autobiographical sequences dealing with his New York Jewish childhood and adolescence. And as the husband of the Zionist writer and activist Marie Syrkin, his Jewishness, which otherwise might not have concerned him as much, was something he kept coming back to.

And yet, as Robert Alter remarked in a 1977 essay on Reznikoff,* when it came to "conquering [this concern] for his own imaginative purposes," he did not enjoy "any imposing success." This is putting it rather charitably, for Reznikoff's "Jewish" poetry is on the whole distinctly second-rate. No doubt there was something inherently incongruous about a poet whose forte was shutter-quick snapshots trying to tackle the grand themes of Jewish history and identity. The main solution he came up with for dealing with this problem was a curious one, but, though it is possible to grasp its logic, it cannot be said to have worked very well.

Essentially, this solution was to take Jewish texts—the Bible, the Midrash, the prayer book, the Haggadah—and retell or paraphrase them in Reznikoff's own poetic style. Thus, for example, a long poem entitled "A Short History of Israel" begins with a reference to Abraham, segues to Jacob, and then to Joseph and the Israelites in Egypt:

The prince who once left an
ancient city
for the sands in which there were
only snakes and lizards,
the vulture and the owl—wilderness that led to wilderness—
has become this stranger,
whose pillow is a stone,
who leads a flock from well to
well,
no faster than the lambs can walk,
afraid
of those whose water and whose
land it is;

* "Poet of Exile," COMMENTARY, February 1977.

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. . .
the servant who once served a
master well—
Potiphar and Pharaoh—has
become a tribesman with
matted hair,
this slave, the son of a slave;
a desert fox
become a faithless dog, fawning,
upon the sleek Egyptian for a
fish,
afraid,
and snarling at the whip,
that lifts him from his sleep.

This sort of enterprise is pointless. It is one thing to observe a street or a lake, and then, using a kind of poetic shorthand, to sketch it in verse; it is another to versify the book of Genesis as if it were a street or a lake. As Alter puts it, "The problem is that while this technique can yield a chaste precision and suggestiveness when focused on the immediate data of the writer's own experience, its application to [sacred] historical documents may lead to a kind of helplessness." Commenting on sacred texts is an essential Jewish activity; making do with condensing and rephrasing them is to acknowledge that as a commentator one has nothing to say. Why would anyone want to read an Objectivist abridgement of the Bible?

In general, Reznikoff seems to read Jewish history by the light of the tough Lower East Side streets he grew up on. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he reads those streets, in the light of Jewish history, as a story of attacks on Jews and of Jewish efforts, sometimes heroic and sometimes not, to stand up to them. In one of his autobiographical passages (put by me into a prose format from which, I daresay, no reader could guess that it had been printed as poetry or succeed in restoring its original line arrangement), he writes:

> I saw him walking along slowly at night, holding a tray of candy and chewing-gum: a Jewish boy of fifteen or sixteen with large black eyes and a gentle face. He sidled into a saloon and must have been ordered away, because he came out promptly through the swinging doors.
>
> I wondered what he was doing far from a Jewish neighborhood. (I knew the side streets and the roughs standing about on the corners and stoops.) What a prize this shambling boy with his tray! I stepped up to warn him against leaving the brightly-lit avenue. He listened, eyed me steadily, and walked on calmly. I looked at him in astonishment and thought: has nothing frightened you? Neither the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, by the Romans, by the Crusaders? No pogrom in Russia; no Nazi death-camp in Germany? How can you still go about so calmly?

It is all one: the biblical Jacob fearful of the local inhabitants, the Israelite slave cringing from the Egyptian, the Jewish victim of the Crusaders, the inmate of the Nazi death camps, the frightened child on the streets of Manhattan. Understandable in a Jewish poet who grew up in an America far more anti-Semitic than it is today, and who reached poetic maturity in the period of the Holocaust, this is nevertheless not a very interesting perspective.

And so one is left in the end with a handful of short poems—there are perhaps ten or fifteen of them in this collected volume—that have come out of the dark room, as it were, to make one exclaim, "Yes, it's perfect! The light is right, the composition is right, the shutter was snapped at just the right moment." This may not sound like much, but in fact it is a great deal. No anthology of American poetry should be without Reznikoff's "Put it down in your ledger" or "You tell me that you write only a little now." These are poems that will last. How many poets of his or any generation have done as well?

Gatekeepers

The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton

by Jerome Karabel

Houghton Mifflin. 711 pp. $28.00

Reviewed by
Jonathan Kay

On November 21, 1925, Harvard and Yale played the 44th installment in their storied football rivalry. Though Yale was heavily favored, Harvard's fierce defensive play held the visitors to a 0-0 tie. According to the *Harvard Crimson*, the home team had won "a scoreless victory."

Yet Harvard alumnus W.F. Williams, who had traveled from Greenwich, Connecticut to cheer on his alma mater, took no pleasure in the game. Twenty-four years had passed since his graduation, and he was bewildered by the school's transformation. As he wrote in a letter to Harvard president Abbot Lawrence Lowell, describing his ordeal on that autumn Saturday:

> Being uncertain what [stadium] entrance to use, I stopped a boy, evidently a student, to ask directions—he was a Jew. Rounding the corner . . . I made enquiries from three other boys, also very evidently students—two Jews and a Negro, fraternizing. I was ushered to my seat at the game by a Jew, and another of the same "breed" followed me to my seat and required me to sign my ticket. . . . Shades of my New England parents that Harvard University should come to such a pass. [The Jews] are without doubt the Damned of God and the skunks of the human race. . . . Are the Overseers so lacking in genius that they can't devise a way to

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bring Harvard back to the position it always held as a "white man's" college?

Far from being scandalized by the letter, Lowell was delighted. Since 1922, the Harvard president had been trying to impose a quota on the number of Jewish students admitted to the university. The testimonials of Williams and other disgruntled alumni strengthened his hand.

AS JEROME KARABEL explains in *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton*, the rapid influx of Jewish students in the early years of the 20th century presented a dramatic challenge to the existing Ivy League order. Until that time, the nation's top three universities had had little trouble ensuring the homogeneity of their Protestant enclaves. Student recruitment was a cozy, inbred affair. Typically, admissions officers would pay regular visits to favored "feeder" schools—Groton in the case of Harvard, Lawrenceville in the case of Princeton—where they would be wined and dined by the headmaster, who would also recommend a roster of graduating students. There were entrance exams, to be sure, but for those with the right connections, these were a formality.

As a result, Karabel argues, the Ivy League campuses were chock-a-block with the doltish sons of blue-blooded businessmen. "The 'gentlemen's C' reigned supreme," he writes, while hard-working students were ridiculed as "grinds." The model to which students aspired, epitomized by Franklin Delano Roosevelt at Harvard and the fictional Dink Stover of Owen Johnson's 1912 novel, *Stover at Yale*, was the athletic, good-looking, affable man-about-campus, preferably descended from a similarly genteel alumnus.

Though none of the universities had formal policies barring Jews or Catholics, their prohibitive cost and academic requirements (including Latin and Greek in the early days) guaranteed a near-monopoly for the prestigious prep schools of New England and the mid-Atlantic states. During the 19th century, only a few respectable German Jews from established families had been able to pass the entry exams and pay tuition. But now, suddenly confronted with growing numbers of eligible Jewish applicants from Eastern European backgrounds—applicants whom administrators often stereotyped as sickly, grasping, beetle-browed misfits—the universities sought remedies.

In an effort to limit Jewish enrollment, admissions officers began to emphasize qualities such as "character," "leadership," and "manliness." In 1922, Harvard started asking each applicant to list his "race and color," "religious preference," and "maiden name of mother." Four years later, it also began to demand a photo. Suspect applicants were classified as J1 (definitely Jewish), J2 (probably Jewish), and J3 (possibly Jewish).

All of this, Karabel shows, served its intended purpose. In 1925, the year W.F. Williams had his harrowing experience at Harvard stadium, Jews comprised 28 percent of the university's undergraduate class. Within just a few years, the figure dropped to half that. At the top universities, an informal quota system remained in place for decades.

But such measures were controversial. At all three schools, they set off a civil war among the ruling set. On the progressive side were professors tired of teaching second-rate minds from first-rate families. On the side of tradition and privilege were alumni with a vested interest in the continuation of a system that advantaged their own sons. Their argument centered, crudely at times, on the notions of "leadership" and "character" that admissions officials had been pushing for years. As they saw it, only WASP's were capable of running the country—and, thanks to the exclusionary nature of U.S. society at that point, the facts were with them.

Caught in the middle were administrators. Most followed the lead of James Bryant Conant, Harvard's president from 1933 to 1953, who spoke the language of meritocracy in public while cynically permitting the admissions office to maintain business as usual.

WORLD WAR II and the G.I. Bill helped to democratize campuses. But in Karabel's telling, it was the 1957 launch of Sputnik 1 that truly settled matters. Thanks to the ensuing space race, the Ivy League's "grinds" were transformed from campus pariahs to strategic assets, and it became clear that their ascent could no longer be blocked by obsolete prejudices. Far-sighted university administrators began overhauling admissions policies, and Jews soon won or regained entry in numbers never before seen. The change was especially dramatic at Yale, where the freshman class went from being 16-percent Jewish in 1965 to 30-percent Jewish just a year later.

The era also brought striking gains in the Ivy League for blacks. As late as 1960, just 15 of the more than 3,000 freshmen who enrolled at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were black. Following the Watts riots of 1965, administrators moved quickly to boost these numbers. "The dominant theme in the texts of the period was neither diversity nor compensation for past injustices," Karabel writes, "but rather the need for 'Negro leadership.'" The top universities understood themselves to be part of a "struggle for the soul of the nation's black population," bounded on one side by "the apostles of nonviolence and integration" and on the other by "the proponents of violence and separatism."

Unfortunately, there were few black applicants who could meet the ordinary admission criteria. In the mid-1960's, only 0.3 percent of black male high-school graduates

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scored more than 550 on the verbal section of the SAT. And so the universities lowered their standards for black applicants, often by hundreds of SAT points. The result was dramatic. By 1970, about 9 percent of the freshmen at the top Ivies were black, an 18-fold increase in a single decade.

Women soon followed, with Yale and Princeton admitting female applicants in 1969. (Harvard was already effectively co-ed thanks to its long-standing relationship with Radcliffe College.) Some tradition-minded alumni again raised a fuss, but their influence had waned sharply. In the post-World War II era, the growth of federal research grants had made universities less reliant on donations. And in the larger culture, the events of the 1960's conspired to discredit the claims of alumni and the WASP elite that they represented.

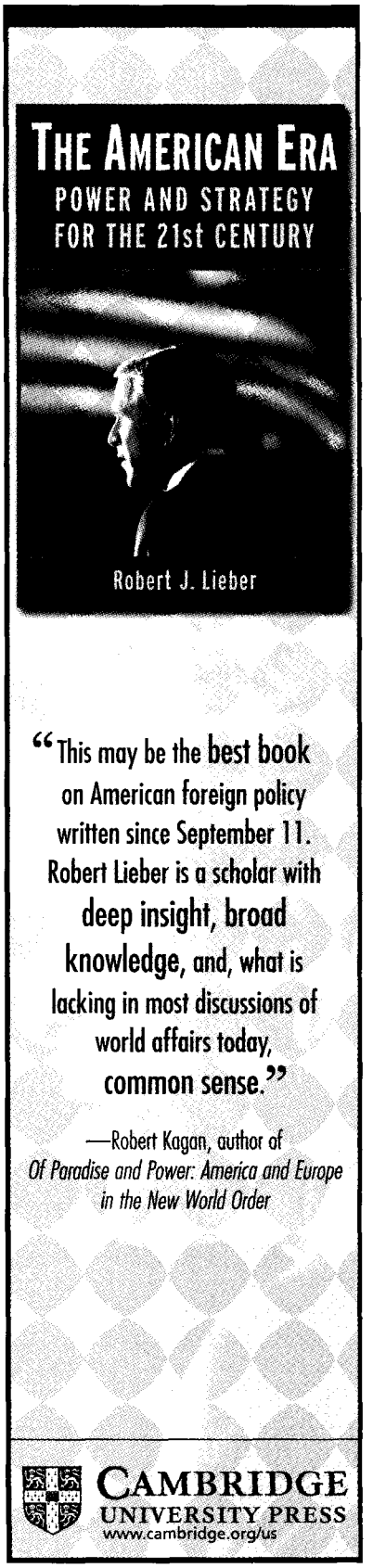
By the 1970's, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton had put in place the admissions policies that survive to this day. Students are now screened largely on the basis of merit, but administrators retain enough discretion to ensure racial and ethnic "diversity," admitting blacks and Hispanics in large numbers while presumably regulating "overrepresented" minorities like Jews and Asians. If, a century ago, 85 percent of Harvard's students were white, Protestant males, today the figure is just 20 percent. W.F. Williams would be appalled.

The Chosen is a mammoth, meticulously researched book. Confidential memos, minutes of meetings, personal correspondence among university administrators, material from alumni magazines, editorials from student newspapers—no document seems to have escaped Karabel's scrutiny. Such thoroughness is admirable in its way, but *The Chosen* would have been a better book—and certainly a more enjoyable read—if Karabel had left much of this on the cutting-room floor. Lengthy biographical sketches also add unnecessary heft. Some are fascinating—in particular, the campus profiles of FDR at Harvard and F. Scott Fitzgerald at Princeton—but too many of them dwell on the experiences of barely distinguishable patrician New Englanders.

Still, nestled within *The Chosen*'s 700-odd pages is a fascinating book of half that length. In presenting a history of admissions at the leading universities, Karabel has cast a bright light on the basic assumptions of American elites at different times concerning who would—and should—lead the country. One of his key findings is that, contrary to conservative myth, there never was a golden age for pure meritocracy. By the time widespread discrimination against Jews was eliminated in the 1960's, universities had already taken their first open steps toward the preferential admission of blacks, an infringement of the meritocratic ideal that persists to this day.

Nowhere in the book does Karabel suggest he is bothered by this. He views merit not as an absolute but rather as a malleable concept defined according to the balance of power among competing constituencies. As seen through this lens, the fact that Jews profited by fighting discrimination and blacks now profit from its perpetuation is irrelevant. Both groups have simply succeeded in redefining merit to serve their own purposes.

There is, however, an enormous difference between the two cases—which is why no one thinks twice today about the decision to ease off on Jewish quotas in favor of merit while affirmative action (and, for that matter, legacy preferences) continue to grate heavily against the fundamental belief that individuals should be judged, as Martin Luther King, Jr. put it, "by the content of their character." No less an authority than the U.S. Supreme Court has emphasized this distinction, at least for public institutions. Even as the Justices narrowly upheld the University of Michigan law school's affirmative-action program in the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2003 case of *Grutter* v. *Bollinger*, they wrote of their expectation that "25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today." Affirmative action did not redefine the merit principle, as Karabel would have us believe; rather, it provided a temporary license to part ways with it.

Though the social engineers on our elite campuses have tried to co-opt the definition of merit, ordinary people instinctively know what the word means: intellectual talent coupled with a disposition to apply it productively. Standardized tests, grades, and extracurricular activities may not be a perfect means of measuring these traits, but they are certainly better than skin color. Jerome Karabel has produced an authoritative and brilliantly researched book, but it would have been greatly improved had he not ignored this simple moral truth.

Miniatures

New Art City
by Jed Perl
Knopf. 641 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Michael J. Lewis

IN A healthy art world, the most precious asset of a critic is his eye; in an unhealthy one it is his probity. Of course, no critic is completely disinterested, and all are subject to external pressure, even if merely in the form of an impulse to be agreeable to one's fellows. But when academic authority turns sclerotic and artists suffer from collective demoralization, or when an aesthetic movement has spent its force and hardened into platitude, there is little left to offset the influences and blandishments that regularly distort critical judgment. Such is the case today, when, for example, Matthew Barney—whose *Cremaster Cycle* is a seven-and-a-half-hour video phantasmagoria named after a muscle in the male sexual organ—can be hailed in the *New York Times* as the "the most important American artist of his generation."

One who has maintained his probity in an era of diminished art and inflated reputations is Jed Perl, since 1994 the art critic of the *New Republic*. Perl does not suffer fools gladly: for him, Barney is but a purveyor of "phony-baloney mytho-poetic movies, accompanied by dumpster loads of junk from some godforsaken gymnasium of the imagination." Nor does he hesitate to ignore a celebrity altogether: asked to do a well-placed piece on the photographer Cindy Sherman, he refused even to write a negative review: "Sherman's notoriety was basically a public-relations gambit, and I didn't want to become part of the PR."

WITH *New Art City*, an epic treatment of New York's rise to the international capital of art during the post-World War II era, Perl now turns from criticism to history. It is a massive story, and a familiar one. On the eve of the war, a stream of refugees had arrived in New York who formed a kind of government-in-exile of European modernism. Out of a tumult of forces—the trauma of war; the insights of Freud and Jung; a collective rejection of the agitprop art of the 1930's—there arose the New York School of Abstract Expressionism, including such luminaries as Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and Franz Kline.

To be sure, cultural power customarily follows financial power. From this perspective, it is hardly surprising that postwar New York should have assumed the preeminence that Paris had enjoyed in 1900, or Rome in 1600. But what was remarkable was that a country with such a long record of philistine indifference to visual culture could move in a single generation from art's provincial periphery to its very epicenter.

This story is generally told in one of two ways, the first of which is to trace the pedigree of ideas. Abstract Expressionism drew on the long-standing modernist interest in formal and abstract structure, which in painting culminated in the Cubism of Braque and Picasso; it also drew on the lessons of Surrealism, which sought a psychologically authentic art, liberated from all conscious control and moral judgment. In Europe, these were entirely different and implacably hostile systems of thought, but in the United States—where artists inevitably pried styles away from their accompanying ideological baggage—the two movements merged to form an art that was both non-representational and psychologically intense.

The second way is to write an institutional history, tracing the marketing tactics of art galleries and the exhibiting and purchasing policies of museums. In combination, these form a wary minuet that can suddenly turn into a frenzied whirl, as they did in New York in late 1962 when Pop Art suddenly flared into notoriety.

Both types of history undergird the standard surveys of the period: William C. Seitz's *Abstract Expressionist Painting in America* (1983) and Irving Sandler's *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism* (1976). Perl, however, has declined to write a book in which paintings and sculpture are invoked to illustrate a movement or a trend. Nor does he have much interest in the public lobe of the art world, the realm of marketing and glamor. His interest is rather in the private lobe, where dozens of individual painters and sculptors, laboring in the solitary outposts of their studios, struggle to give aesthetic expression to personal feeling.

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The bulk of this book thus comprises capsule essays on separate artists, discussing their biographies and personal styles and in each case analyzing a few characteristic works. The names one would expect to find are all here—abstract artists like Hans Hoffman, Mark Rothko, and Kline, and Pop artists like Jasper Johns and Alex Katz—but so are many others, including such relative obscurities as Leland Bell, Earl Kerkam, and the collagist known simply as Jess.

Perl does not subordinate these capsule accounts to a grand narrative, the way a military historian might digest a thousand separate and simultaneous actions into a single sweeping account of a battle. For him, it is the individual act—the creation of a discrete painting or sculpture—that is meaningful. This decision to accord lengthy treatment to individual artists, many of whom had long careers, cannot help blunting the imperative of chronology, which is the dramatic essence of history, but Perl does nevertheless achieve a kind of cumulative momentum. And he is quite good at making a 50-year-old canvas by Philip Guston or Ad Reinhardt seem urgent and vital.

Trained as a painter, and steeped in the deliberations that take place in front of a blank canvas, Perl brings a great empathy to these treatments. His own taste is strictly formalist—that is, he values art in which the principal aesthetic interest is to be found on the canvas itself, in its forms and colors, and not in the story it tells or the moral it teaches, or (more likely today) the scandal it prompts. Within the confines of this formalism, his tastes are omnivorous enough to accept both minimalist abstraction and photorealism, but they are not without limits.

In particular, Perl turns a cold shoulder to art not created in the studio, or without the investment of deep private feeling. He has little sympathy for Pop Art, especially the kind that appropriates graphic imagery in which the artist has no emotional investment; he has still less sympathy for conceptual art, where there is no form at all. This is another strength of the book, and a welcome corrective to histories that view the period through the lens either of theory or of contemporary critics like Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg. Perl understands that most aesthetic discoveries lie in the tactile rather than the literary realm.

On the other hand, Perl has a great weakness for artists who can write, and who use words carefully. The inarticulate by temperament (Pollock) or by strategy (Warhol) get short shrift here; quotable artist-critics like Reinhardt, Fairfield Porter, or Donald Judd are accorded generous treatment. This produces some oddities, as when Pollock occupies less space than Mercedes Matter, the founder of the New York Studio School.

No doubt aware that his episodic approach needed some sort of overarching structure, Perl has settled on the organizing idea of New York itself—its forms, textures, and social life, and the responses of artists to these. As a framework, this falls short, and is also something of an anachronism. Manhattan and modernism may have been synonymous in the 1920's, when artists reacted directly to the scale and sensory barrage of the modern city. But by the 1950's, in a New York chastened by war and Depression, the city was no longer the euphoric place it had been, and the meaning of both Manhattan and modernism had become fractured. The loss of industry was already in evidence, and the lower-Manhattan quarters into which painters poured themselves were somewhat shabby and seedy. (It was the gradual erosion of manufacturing jobs, particularly in textiles, that permitted them their affordable lofts in the first place.) Perl, who is so good at reading the nuances of painting, is rather less

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successful when it comes to reading the city.

The merit of *New Art City* lies in its depth and exquisite detail, its freedom from tendentiousness, and its refusal to subordinate the art it examines to any larger moral or narrative. But this also deprives it of the continuities necessary in a large book, and of any rising or falling action. As with a boisterous and good-humored party, one can enter at any point to a warm reception, but one can leave just as easily. In the end, *New Art City* remains the work of an exceptionally gifted miniaturist, a handful of pearls without the string.

It has taken a half-century to shake off the hagiography that greeted the first generation of Abstract Expressionists, and that ever since then has distorted the history of this epoch. Only recently has it become possible to adjust the air pressure in several of the more inflated reputations, especially that of Pollock, whose star has fallen as de Kooning's has risen. One can therefore understand why Perl steers clear of the wild bets that were once placed on Abstract Expressionism.

But some sort of retrospective assessment is required, if only by the radically different course art has taken in the intervening years. If the New York School succeeded so completely in banishing narrative, politics, and recognizable subject matter from art, why did these come rushing back in the next decade, remaining permanent fixtures to this day? Was it the sudden and unprecedented celebrity of a figure like Pollock—capering about his studio, flinging paint with effortless abandon—that paved the way for today's culture of instantaneous and unearned celebrity? A larger and more spacious evaluation of the New York School is still wanting. When it is written, Perl's wry and whimsical tour of the studios will supply a welcome building block.

American Dreamer

President Reagan: The Triumph of Imagination

by Richard Reeves

Simon & Schuster. 592 pp. $28.00

Reviewed by
James Nuechterlein

AMBIVALENCE IS neither unusual nor objectionable in a biographical study—life, after all, is seldom straightforward. But Richard Reeves's treatment of the presidency of Ronald Reagan is ambivalent to the point of incoherence. From beginning to end, Reeves, formerly a chief political correspondent for the *New York Times*, wanders inconclusively both in the way he presents the story of Reagan's two terms in office and in his judgment of those eight years.

The muddle starts with the subtitle. "The Triumph of Imagination," as Reeves discusses it in his introduction, has a double meaning. Negatively, it is Reagan's vision of "a gentle God-fearing and whitewashed American past that never was, that he persuaded himself and many others was real and wonderful." More positive is Reagan's image of "an American future of lower taxes, less government, . . . military superiority, and a world where Americans would walk proudly and safely on the meanest streets and trails of the world."

At first glance, this seems balanced and clear. But then one pauses to reflect: what precisely does the reference to walking proudly on mean streets signify? And what, other than gratuitous denigration, is added by the words that immediately follow: "[Reagan] believed everyone admired or envied Americans—if they did not, they were evil"? As is true in so much of this book, the description is muddy, the implication obscure but deprecating.

President Reagan is similar in many respects to earlier books by Reeves on the presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Its 23 chapters, each of them headed by a specific date, attempt a chronological account of a President's term in office without—aside from the brief introduction and the even briefer afterword—offering much in the way of analysis. The intent, one gathers, is to say to the reader, "This is what happened, make of it what you will."

The problem with this approach is not that Reeves and his research assistants have failed to do their homework. They have read pretty much all there is to read, in primary and secondary sources alike, about the Reagan presidency, and Reeves's extensive interviews with those who knew Reagan add immediacy to the narrative. Nor, despite Reeves's professed liberal inclinations, his indulgence in petty put-downs (it seems that no presidential gaffe goes unrecorded), and his too frequent reliance on tendentious sources, is the book oblivious to Reagan's strengths.

The President who emerges in these pages has redeeming qualities. If Reagan was guilty, in Reeves's estimate, of "dumbing down the nation's dialogue," he also "knew how to be President." Reagan carried the weight of the office lightly; when Jimmy Carter presumed to instruct him on its burdens, Reagan concluded that there must be "something wrong with Carter." Reeves also makes the shrewd point that Reagan was "staff-dependent but not staff-driven." He delegated widely—sometimes recklessly—but on the issues that counted to him he went his own way.

Reeves further acknowledges, though seldom straightforwardly, Reagan's impressive personal and political qualities: his mastery of Congress, command of public opinion, skills as an international nego-

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Arabian Fables (II)

More fanciful Arab myths to sway world opinion.

Earlier this year, we published our message, "Arabian Fables (I)," in which we made clear how the Arab propaganda machine creates myths and lies with which to misinform the world. We discussed the myths of the "Palestinians"and of the "West Bank" and the mythical concept of "occupied territories". In today's message, we shall address three more of these myths.

What are some of these myths?

Jerusalem ("Arab East Jerusalem"). The Arabs have assiduously propagated the myths that Jerusalem is an Arab capital, that (after Mecca and Medina) Jerusalem is their third holy city, and that it is intolerable to them that infidels (Jews) are in possession of it.

The reality of course is that Jerusalem was never an Arab capital and that it was, until the Jews revitalized it, a dusty provincial city that hardly played any economic, social, or political role. Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Jewish Bible and has been the center of the Jewish faith and the focus of Jewish longing ever since the Romans destroyed the Temple in the early years of the first millennium. Not once is Jerusalem mentioned in the Koran.

As to "East Jerusalem": There is East Saint Louis, there is East Hampton, and there used to be East Berlin, but, until the Arab propaganda machine created the concept, there was never in history an "East Jerusalem", let alone an "Arab East Jerusalem".

> "The Arab propaganda machine has created myths that have been accepted by much of the world. No peace in the Middle East is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are!"

The eastern part of Jerusalem is now predominantly inhabited by Arabs, though their proportion is decreasing. But what is the reason for this? It is because the Jordanians destroyed all traces of Jewish presence from the eastern part of the city and drove all the Jews out during the 19 years (between 1948 and 1967) in which they were in occupation of the eastern part of the city. The world, informed by Arab propaganda, considers those Jews who wish to return to the eastern part of the city to be troublemakers or worse.

The concept of Jerusalem being a holy Arab city and the capital of whatever political entity the "Palestinians" may eventually form is a myth and so of course is the concept of "Arab East Jerusalem".

"Settlements." When Jordan came into possession of Judea/Samaria and the eastern part of Jerusalem, following the invasion of the newly-formed Jewish state, and stayed in occupation for 19 years, it systematically obliterated all Jewish villages in the area under their occupation, drove out the Jewish inhabitants, and left the area "judenrein" (free of Jews)—the first time that concept had been applied since the Nazis created it during their short and bloody reign in Germany. When the Israelis recovered these territories, they rebuilt these villages, created new ones, and built new towns and suburbs to existing cities, especially Jerusalem.

The Arabs decided to call these towns and villages "settlements", with their connotation of illegitimacy and impermanence. The world, including the United States, is much agitated over these population centers and, goaded by the Arabs, declares them to be impediments to peace. What nonsense! Nobody considers the tens of thousands of Arabs who continue to stream to these territories as impediments to peace.

The term "settlements", too, is a propaganda myth created by the Arabs.

"Refugees." In 1948, when six Arab armies invaded the Jewish state in order to destroy it on the very day of its birth, broadcasts by the advancing Arab armies appealed to the resident Arabs to leave their homes so as not to be in the way of the invaders. As soon as the "quick victory" was won, they could return to their homes and would also enjoy the loot from the Jews, who would have been driven into the sea. It didn't turn out quite that way. Those Arabs who, despite the urgings of the Jews to stay and to remain calm, foolishly left, became refugees. Those who decided not to yield to those blandishments are now, and have been for over 50 years, citizens of Israel, with all the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows.

But what happened to those refugees—by best estimates about 600,000 of them? Did their "Arab brethren" allow them to settle in their countries, to work, and to become productive citizens and useful members of their societies? No! They kept and still keep them, their children, their grandchildren, and in some cases even their great-grandchildren, in miserable "refugee camps", so that they can be used as political and military pawns in order to keep the burning hatred against Israel alive and in order to supply the manpower for the unremitting fight against Israel.

During those more than fifty years, Israel has taken in more than three million Jewish immigrants from all parts of the world and has integrated them productively into its society. According to the "Palestinians", the Arab "refugees" have now marvelously increased to five million (!). It is the intent and fervent desire of the Arabs that all of them should return to Israel so as to destroy the country without the necessity of war.

The "refugees" are a red herring and another myth created by the Arab propaganda machine.

The Arab propaganda machine, aided by the most high-powered public relations firms in the United States and all over, has created myths that, by dint of constant repetition, have been accepted as truth by much of the world. No sensible discussion, no peace in the Middle East, is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are.

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tiator, and, most of all, sheer likability. Here, his behavior after the attempt on his life by John Hinckley in 1981 was crucial. People do not rehearse for near-death experiences, and Reagan's noble response to the shooting made Americans realize that they had in their leader not simply a Hollywood actor but a man of wit, character, and courage.

Reeves himself avoids such general evaluations. Perhaps the major lesson one gleans from his detailed recounting is unintended and indirect: in appraising a President, it is a great mistake to put the short view ahead of the long. Reeves makes heavy use of contemporary media accounts and editorial reactions, enabling one to see in retrospect how journalism's first draft of history is by its very nature so often rough and partial, riddled with exaggeration and distorted by bias. Most major media outlets in the 1980's were, at the least, suspicious of Reagan. Their regular sightings of imminent disaster for an administration that was, by most present reckonings, highly successful should provide a cautionary lesson to today's observers.

WHEN ONE lifts one's attention, as Reeves seldom does, from what happened day by day to what has endured, it is not difficult to outline the major themes and results of the Reagan presidency. In domestic policy, his was a program of limited government, federalism, reliance on individual responsibility and voluntary associations, reduced government spending, and, most fundamentally, lower tax rates. Reagan did not win everywhere, but in launching a counterrevolution against New Deal assumptions of the necessity and beneficence of ever-expanding government, he did change the terms of debate of American politics. By the end of his presidency, there were more self-proclaimed conservatives in America than there were liberals, and as many Republicans as Democrats. It was a remarkable political transformation.

In was in defense and foreign policy that Reagan most stubbornly followed his own instincts. On one issue after another—Grenada, Central America, the nuclear-freeze movement, arms negotiations—he opposed much of the conventional wisdom of the foreign-policy establishment. This was obvious above all in his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), where he took on not just the Democrats but much of his own administration. In what his critics derided as "star wars," he challenged the moral and strategic logic of Mutual Assured Destruction that had undergirded nuclear policy throughout most of the cold war. He also put the fear of God into the USSR and helped to bring it down. He knew that Mikhail Gorbachev knew that the Soviet Union could not afford strategically to let American experiments with SDI go unchallenged but that it also could not afford financially to mount such a challenge. As Reeves understands, SDI, feasible or not, was "the ultimate bargaining chip," even if Reagan considered it far more than that, an instrument for ending the nuclear competition altogether.

Reagan did not, of course, get everything right, either foreign or domestic. There were plenty of blunders along the way, the Iran-*contra* affair most notably. There it appears that Reagan allowed his emotional distress over the plight of American hostages to lead him into egregious policy errors. Yet even in this case the contemporary media response appears, in hindsight, more than a little exaggerated. As the minority report of the congressional committee investigating the issue concluded: "There was no constitutional crisis, no systematic disrespect for the 'rule of law,' no grand conspiracy, and no administration-wide dishonesty or cover-up."

IN THE end, Ronald Reagan was, above all, an American exceptionalist. He believed in the American Dream, even—and here things could get scary—in America's divine mission. His image of the U.S. as a biblical "city on a hill" was no throwaway line. But he never presumed that he had providential knowledge or privilege. He enlisted his unabashed patriotism in the cause of restoring an American confidence that had been badly shaken by the upheavals of the 60's and the malaise of the 70's. Reagan's program of conservative restorationism achieved its political purpose: liberals were driven to distraction by his reelection theme of "morning in America," but he rode it to a huge victory, and despite the vicissitudes of his second term, he left office on a wave of public approval.

But whatever one thinks of the wisdom of Reagan's policies or the success of his efforts, it is sadly ironic that in this volume the story of what he tried to do is so inadequately told. In this respect, Reeves's final paragraph is as unsatisfying as his introduction. Typically without transition from what precedes it (Reeves is a choppy writer with a predilection for run-on sentences), it tells of the week-long national mourning that followed Reagan's death on June 5, 2004, and ends:

> "God, this is impressive," said Steven Weisman, a *New York Times* White House correspondent during the Reagan years. "But the man they're talking about is not the President I covered every day."

And that's it. The reader is left wondering, after some 500 pages, what the reality of Reagan's presidency was and what comment about it would have been appropriate. As throughout, Reeves's tone here is vaguely hostile toward Reagan, but no indictment is ever specified. Torn as the book is between Reeves's obvious disapproval of Reagan's policies and his grudging appreciation of what he accomplished, and never stopping to offer a considered judgment, *President Reagan* ends in the same muddle that it has been all along.

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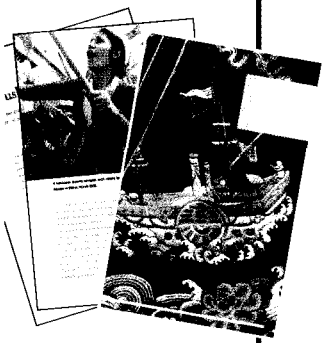

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Sleepwalking Moralists

Present-day moralists lecture the civilized but ignore the brutes.

To paraphrase the ancient Greeks, it is easy to be moral in your sleep. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other global humanitarian groups recently expressed criticism over the slated trial of the accused mass murderer Saddam Hussein. Such self-appointed auditors of moral excellence were worried that his legal representation was inadequate. Or perhaps they felt the court of the new Iraqi democracy was not quite up to the standards of wigged European judges in The Hague. Relay those concerns to the nearly one million silent souls butchered by Saddam's dictatorship. Once they waited in vain for any such international human rights organizations to stop the murdering. None could or did. Sleepwalking moralizers chastise those who listen and are civilized—but see nothing, hear nothing, and speak nothing about those in the moral abyss.

—Victor Davis Hanson

Back to the USSR

They've gotten used to freedom, so why do Russians still yearn for the old days?

Is Putin's long-run aim to restore the old Soviet Union? Russians always insist that it would be impossible to turn back the clock. Yet there is a discernible nostaligia for the terrible simplification of the old days. One recent poll found that 53 percent of Russians still regard Stalin as a great leader. The explanation is not far to seek: The collapse of communism has meant a dramatic decline in living standards. Since 1989, the Russian mortality rate has risen from below 11 per 1,000 to more than 15 per 1,000—nearly double the American rate. Whether Putin can raise living standards as quickly as they have been raised in China is a moot point. But what he can undoubtedly give Russians is a sense of geopolitical revival.

—Niall Ferguson

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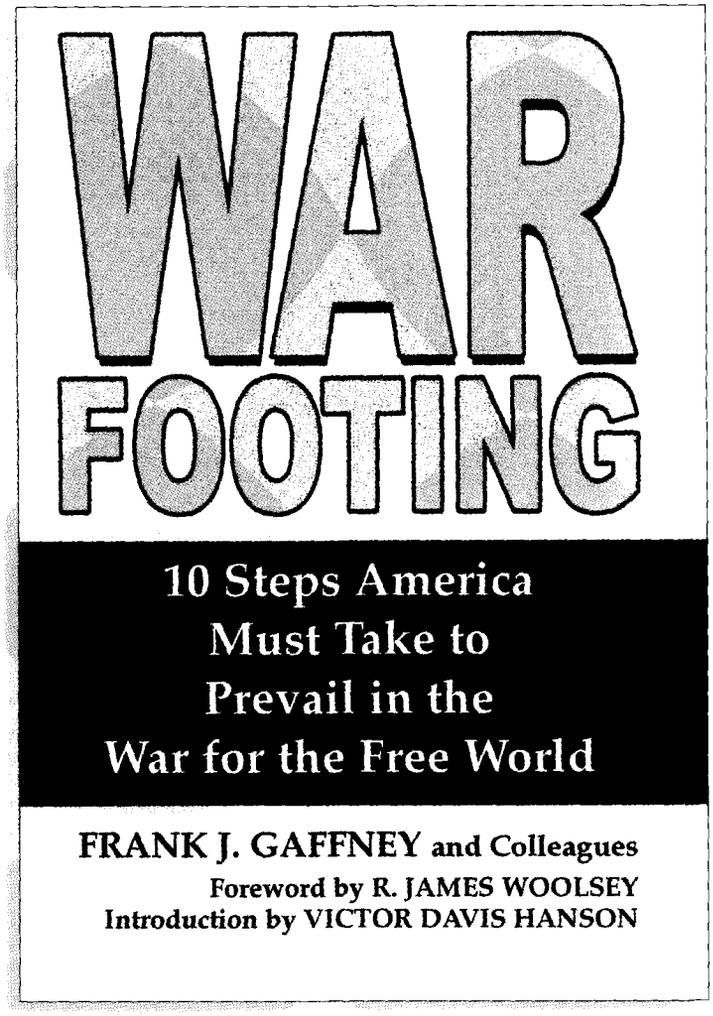

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Frank J. Gaffney is one of the most insightful and thoughtful national security experts of our time. A former senior official in the Reagan Defense Department, he founded the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Security Policy in 1988.

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